

A GREAT WAR STORY OF SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA.

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CAVALRY CURT;

OR,

The Wizard Scout of the Army.

By G. WALDO BROWNE,

Author of "The Swordsman of Toledo," "Border Knights," Etc., Etc.



"HOLD UP THERE, YOU YANKEE DEVIL! WILL YOU SURRENDER!" SHOUTED THE REBEL LEADER. "NEVER!" CRIED CAVALRY CURT, DASHING MADLY ON.

CAVALRY CURT;

—OR,—

THE WIZARD OF THE ARMY.

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CHAPTER I.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

"Halt! who comes there?"

Time: Daybreak on the morning of May 6th, 1864.

Scene: A wild, broken area of country in northern Georgia.

Actors: In the foreground, a horseman and a drowsy sentinel roused to a sense of his duty by the sound of the approaching rider; in the background, a score or more of Confederate calvary—men springing from their blankets at the warning of danger.

A rifle had sprung to the shoulder of the startled sentry, and the sharp click of a lock followed his ringing challenge.

The foam-flecked steed of the on-comer was hurled back upon its haunches by the iron hold laid upon its bit.

"Who comes there?" repeated the ominous tone of the man in gray.

"A friend to the loyal," answered the horseman.

"Advance, friend, and give the counter-sign."

"Freedom!"

As the single word left the stranger's lips, he plunged the rowels deep into his horse's quivering flank, when like an arrow shot from a bow he bounded forward.

The movement was so sudden that before the surprised sentry could discharge his weapon the rider was upon him.

The report of his rifle followed, but the bullet flew wide of its mark, and he was hurled to the earth.

"On, Wildbird, on!" cried the reckless rider, his words drowned by the sounds of his flying steed's iron heel.

The amazed cavalymen had gained their feet.

"Stop him, boys!" cried their leader.

"'Tis one of Sherman's scouts!"

The valley was narrow here.

Upon the right, looking south, rose abruptly the rugged heights.

On the left, a spur of the mountain range had a more gradual ascent.

The escaping horseman was forced to pause within a short distance of his enemies—so near in fact that his white face shone plainly in the starlight.

"Fire!" rang out the cavalry chief's wild command.

A volley of bullets whistled around the fugitive's head.

He was seen to reel in his saddle, but his flight was unchecked.

"S' death! there he goes!" exclaimed the Confederate leader. "Quick! follow me!"

As one the twenty men sprang forward to intercept the fugitive's flight?

Owing to a curve in the valley the horseman could not pursue a straight course.

Thus at the moment when his escape seemed certain he found his retreat cut off.

He was hemmed in.

As yet he had not fired a shot.

His assailants were now so close upon him that his rifle was useless save as a club.

If he realized his hopeless situation he did not hesitate in his headlong course.

"On, Wildbird, on!"

Like a Centaur he swept into the midst of his foes.

Some were hurled right and left.

The foremost seized the bridle of the plunging horse.

"Hold up there, you Yankee devil!"

"Never!" rang out the sharp retort, and the other was felled to the earth.

"On, Wildbird, on!"

The path was blocked.

In vain the noble brute struggled to free himself.

Three of the sentinels were clinging to its bridle and the plunging steed was stopped.

Others of the assailants were trying to pull the rider from his seat.

A few shots were fired, but the fight had come to such close quarters that fire-arms were of little use.

The stranger's rifle had been hurled from his grasp.

He felt himself borne down, and for a moment his struggles ceased.

"Will you surrender?" gritted the leader.

"Never!"

"On, Wildbird, on!"

Suddenly, with a herculean effort, the horseman freed his right arm.

An instant later a knife flashed in his hand.

Descrying a circle in the air it descended with lightning-like rapidity, severing at a single stroke the horse's bridle.

At the same time the assailants staggered back, leaving the wounded and maddened steed free.

With a snort of defiance it bounded forward sending the baffled men right and left.

Before they could rally the dashing scout had cleared them.

A few shots were fired, but none seemed to take effect.

As their yells of rage rang on the air, the fugitive disappeared down the valley.

"That's a pretty go!" muttered the leader of the discomfited gang. "I should rather have lost my right arm than that he should have escaped."

"Did you recognize him, captain?" asked a tall, flaxened-hair soldier.

"He is Cavalry Curt."

"Not Phil Kearney's scout?"

"The same. I heard at headquarters yesterday that he was in these regions. His presence means us mischief."

"And his escape something worse".

"But he must not escape."

"Quick, into the saddle. We must follow him."

Three of the party were injured so that they could not join in the pursuit, and were ordered to remain behind.

The others vaulted into the saddle and a few minutes later were following as rapidly as the country would permit on the trail of the fugitive.

He had only a slight start of them and they felt confident of quickly overtaking and capturing him.

In the very heart of the enemy's country his escape indeed seemed impossible.

CHAPTER II.

THE FUGITIVE SCOUT.

"Look, Mara! Do my old eyes deceive me, or is that a horseman?"

"Where, grandpa?"

"Crossing the ridge yonder."

They presented a striking picture—one bowed beneath the weight of four-score years, his countenance shrunken and wrinkled, his long, thin lock glistening in the sunlight with the frosts of time; the other just budding into womanhood, fair as a poet's dream, with hair that vied with the gold of the sun and eyes of a heavenly blue.

She was leaning gently on the arm of her aged companion as they stood in the doorway of their southern home, gazing upon the surrounding landscape, until his eye had caught sight of an object in the distance which had startled the foregoing dialogue.

"I see him, grandpa!" she exclaimed, as her gaze followed the direction he pointed out.

"He seems to be coming this way, Mara. Who can it be?"

"I cannot tell, grandpa. Oh, in these terrible times I tremble lest every comer be a foe."

"Nay, child; I think we have nothing

to fear. Ah, he heads more to the south. He is not coming here."

The maiden drew a breath of relief, and as the strange rider disappeared from sight a minute later, she said:

"He is gone. I am so glad, too. But, grandpa, have you forgotten that you were to go to Hammond's for me? You will have to start at once; while I shall have to look after my work."

"Yes, yes, Mara, my child. But hark! Dinah is calling for you now. I never saw such a troublesome nigger."

With the words he went into the house, leaving her still standing in the doorway.

She was about to follow her grandparent, when a moving object in the distance caught her gaze.

It looked like a man moving at the top of his speed.

"Who can it be?" she said, speaking aloud. "He is coming this way, too."

Not a little surprised and anxious she continued to watch and wait.

"It must be the horseman grandpa and I saw on the ridge," she mused. "And he is certainly coming here. I suppose I ought to rouse the folks, but little good that will do. Poor old grandpa is our only protection."

The approach of the stranger was no longer a matter of doubt.

In a few minutes he was within plain view.

The maiden saw that he was young—not more than twenty-one or twenty-two. He was handsome, too. Quite tall, broad-shouldered and with a countenance that Apollo might have envied.

But there was a haggard look upon his face, and he carried his left arm in a sling. His step, too, seemed uneasy and she saw that he had gone about as far as nature would permit him.

"A northern man—an accursed Yankee!" she exclaimed under her breath, somewhat fiercely.

No one else had appeared in sight as far as she could see.

"Help, fair lady!" cried the wounded stranger, when he had come within a short distance. "I can go no further!"

She quickly sprang to his side and kindly lent her aid to his falling strength.

With her assistance he reached the doorway, where he sank upon the threshold pale and faint.

"Let me get you a glass of wine," she said, disappearing into the house.

Gone but a minute, she placed the cordial to his lips, when he drank a strong draught.

Revived by its potent power he started up to look wildly around.

"Do you see them?" he asked, huskily.

"Who?" she questioned in surprise.

"A body of horseman. I had a narrow escape from them. My horse was shot and after running until nearly exhausted I saw your house. I had barely strength to get here. I trust you will befriend me," and his dark eyes were turned toward her in pleading more eloquent than words.

Her eyes fell before his gaze.

"You are a Yankee!" she exclaimed in confusion.

"Yes," he answered frankly. "I am one of Sherman's scouts."

A shadow fell upon her fair countenance.

"We are rebels, here!" she faltered. "I have a brother in Johnston's army."

It was his turn to look dismayed.

"Pardon me, I could go no further. I—"

"Never mind; you seem like an honest man, though one of Abe Lincoln's hirelings. You can rest here until you regain your strength."

"Thank you. I will not stop long, for it would not be well for you to have them find me here."

"They may not come this way. Do you know whose command it was?"

"It was led by Captain Dermot."

She turned pale as he uttered the name.

"He is a bad man. But you are wounded. Forgive me for not thinking of it before."

"I do not think it is anything serious. I bandaged it so as to stop somewhat the flow of blood. It is nothing," and he smiled faintly.

"But I must insist upon seeing that it is properly cared for with your permission. I am quite a surgeon."

"Your countenance seems very familiar to me, but it can't be that we have met before."

"No; our name is Morland."

"Morland!" he repeated, excitedly. "Then you are Mara Morland?"

She started with wonder as he mentioned her name.

"Forgive me," he hastened to say, "but I have recognized you from your portrait which I have seen many times. You have a brother Harry."

"Yes; but he is in the army now."

"He and I were chums at college."

"And you are Curtis Remington?"

"The same. This is a glad surprise to me. I little dreamed of meeting you."

"I wish that Harry were here. He used to speak of you often, and he told me how you once saved his life. It seems like meeting an old friend."

"Thank you. So Harry is in the army. I have not heard from him since we left

college. The war broke out soon after and I enlisted at once."

"I shall be glad when this cruel war is over," she exclaimed with a shudder. "But look! there is a body of horsemen coming this way!"

"It is Captain Dermot's company!" declared Curtis Remington. "Can it be possible they have tracked me here?"

"They are coming directly this way. They are riding fast, too."

"Then I must leave you at once. Many thanks for your kindness. Ah," he added, suppressing a groan as he staggered to his feet, "my race is almost run."

CHAPTER III.

TRACKED.

"You cannot—you must not go!" she cried, excitedly. "You will fare no worse by staying here."

"But captivity means death," he declared, quickly; "and I prefer to die as becomes a soldier. I thank you, but—"

"Surely they will not not kill you."

"I shall be shot as a spy!"

"Not if I can save you. What can I do? Oh, I have it; I will secrete you where they cannot find you. Follow me."

"It will imperil your own life. I can not do it."

"No—no! Come, quick! See! they are almost here," and she caught him excitedly by the arm.

Forgetting his wounds he followed her up the stairs.

Reaching the hall she led the way into one of the adjoining apartments.

"Where can you hide?" she said. "In that trunk. Will that do?"

He shook his head.

At the same time he glanced around the room.

The walls were sheathed with boards. Some wearing apparel was hanging in one corner; otherwise they were bare.

"If I could get off one of those boards."

She comprehended his meaning.

"One of them is loose," she replied. Grandpa promised to nail it on this morning."

While speaking she began to remove one of the boards that helped to form the partition.

"See! there is room for you to stand in and they will never think of looking there."

"But what—"

"Don't hesitate. I hear them in the yard. We have no time to lose. Go in there and leave the rest to me."

"He could do no better."

"Have good courage," she said softly, "and I will answer for your safety."

Before he could reply she had replaced the board.

She had barely time to hang the garments over the place, when a loud thumping was heard at the door.

Overcoming her fears as much as possible, she hastily descended the stairs.

Captain Dermot and his squad were at the door.

"Hilloa there!" cried the Confederate leader. "I should think you were all dead or run away."

"What means this unceremonious summons, Captain Dermot?"

"We are after a cursed Yankee spy. Have you seen him pass this way, Miss Morland?"

"No, sir."

"He rode a dark horse and——"

"But when I saw him he was afoot, captain," interrupted one of his followers.

"His horse must have played out."

"You are sure he was coming this way?"

"As certain as I am that I am looking at you."

"Then he can't be far off. Are you sure you have not seen him, Miss Morland?"

"I might have seen him and not have known him," she replied evasively.

"Come to think of it a young man did pass near the house this morning. He was quite tall, and wore a citizen's suit with a black, slouched hat. That much I noticed."

"He is our man!" cried Captain Dermot, excitedly. "Come on, boys. We shall soon overtake him."

"Hold on, captain!" exclaimed the flaxen-haired soldier who had ridden nearer to the house than any of the others, "here is something that tells a story if I'm not mistaken."

As he spoke he raised on the point of his gun where it had lain by the door a fine silk handkerchief.

Mara uttered a low exclamation of dismay.

Quickly holding the handkerchief up to the gaze of the others they read the letters "C. R." embroidered in one corner.

"They mean Curtis Remington—Cavalry Curt," said the soldier with a smile of triumph. "He must have dropped it there."

"And can't be far away himself."

"Perhaps he is hiding in this vicinity now."

"More than likely. Miss Morland, you have deceived us."

"Captain Dermot," said Mara with quivering lips, "do you doubt my loy-

alty? I would rather die than betray the cause my brother has so nobly espoused."

"I do not doubt it," replied the Confederate, "but we must find that accursed spy if possible. General Johnston has offered a thousand dollars to the man who captures him. You will not object to our searching your buildings?"

"No—no. But is it necessary? Grandpa is away. Can't you wait until he returns?"

"Delays are dangerous. Besides Cavalry Curt is no ordinary man. We must not waste any more time. Stand aside, Miss Morland, and let us begin our disagreeable task."

She saw that it was madness to offer further opposition.

Leaving half his number to guard the buildings and see that no one escaped, Captain Dermot with the others began a search for the fugitive scout.

"Here is blood upon the stairs!" cried the sharp-eyed soldier who had discovered the tell-tale handkerchief. "He must have been wounded; he has gone this way."

"You're a brick, Logan!" exclaimed Captain Dermot, leaping up the stairs three at a time, "follow me, boys, and we'll run the fox to his den. Ha! here is more blood!"

Mara's hopes fell as she heard the startling words.

She had taken a great interest in the stranger scout and wished that he might escape.

Again it might fare ill with them were he found on their premises.

She heard the horde enter the very room in which the scout was concealed.

Her heart almost ceased its beating.

With trembling steps she ascended the stairs.

She was met on the second floor by the Confederate captain.

"We don't find the hound," he muttered. "But he can't be far away."

"Then as a baleful light flashed from his piercing eyes he cried:

"Mara Morland, you know where he is!"

CHAPTER IV.

A FEARFUL ALTERNATIVE.

The accusation was so sudden that she started back with an exclamation of terror.

"And you shall be made to tell!" he continued, fiercely, seizing her rudely by the shoulder.

"Back, ruffian!" she cried, with flashing eyes, breaking from his clutch.

"Don't let her escape!" commanded Captain Dermot. "She is in league with the Yankee dog."

At that moment a loud commotion in the hall below caught their attention.

"What's up?" cried Dermot running to the head of the stairs.

"We've got the old man; but he fit like a wild-cat."

"Bring him up here at once."

In spite of his resistance Caleb Morland was dragged up the stairs.

"What means this treatment, Captain Dermot?" said the old man, as soon as he could speak.

"No harm to you, colonel. Perhaps the boys are a little rough though. Release him, boys."

"There, colonel you are a free man. We are in search of a Yankee spy who is hiding somewhere on your premises."

"A Yankee spy hiding on my premises!" repeated Colonel Morland in amazement. "Impossible, Captain Dermot."

"Pardon me, colonel, but it is even so. We saw him come this way, and what better evidence do you want than that, picked up at your door," said the Confederate, triumphantly, displaying the handkerchief dropped by the scout.

"He is Cavalry Curt, the most dangerous man in Sherman's army."

"I have heard of him," acknowledged the old man, huskily. "But you must be mistaken in thinking that he is here. I have only been out of the house a few minutes, and surely you do not doubt my loyalty enough to think that I would give protection to one of Abe Lincoln's spies?"

The old man showed great emotion and his tone was one of honesty.

"No—no; not you, colonel. But—young ladies are sometimes rashly influenced by a good-looking stranger," and he looked at Mara who was a silent spectator.

Colonel Morland caught the meaning of that look; at least he exclaimed:

"Explain yourself, Captain Dermot."

"Ask the young lady if she has seen the man we are in quest of," he replied.

"Mara, have you seen Cavalry Curt?" questioned her grandparent.

"Grandpa," and she spoke quite calmly, "I cannot answer that question, for I do not know Cavalry Curt, I have told Captain Dermot that a man answering to his description was here this morning. He came here soon after you left me. Where he is now I cannot tell. Were Captain Dermot a gentleman he would not trouble us further."

"Ha—ha! you see how it is, captain. You have no reason to doubt our loyalty, I hope you will capture the Yankee dog.

Were I not so old I would join you in the search.

"Bah! Colonel Morland, you jump to a hasty conclusion. It is not your loyalty that we doubt, but the girl's! We know the Yankee dog is in this house!"

The other started with a look of amazement.

"I am sure that you are mistaken, captain; and to prove my sincerity I give you permission to search my buildings as much as you like."

"That we must do, colonel, and shall level them to the earth but we will find them."

"Logan and Andrews, see that the old man and the girl do not leave this room. The rest of you continue the search,

"A sorry day it will be for you, colonel, if we find that spy on your premises."

Completely overcome, the old man bowed his head in silence.

Mara, too, was speechless.

Fifteen minutes later the Confederates gathered around them.

Captain Dermot's swarthy face looked blacker than ever.

"It's no use wasting time in that way," he muttered.

"Mara Morland, you know where that spy is hiding, and, by heavens, you shall tell us or we will tear this house down over your heads."

It was a fearful moment to the maiden.

"Spare us," she implored. "We are loyal yet."

"Will you tell us where Cavalry Curt is hiding?"

"I cannot!"

"You lie. Colonel Morland, do you uphold her in this scheme?"

"No—no. Mara, if you know where the spy is secreted tell him and spare us further trouble."

"Grandpa, are we to submit to his insolence? I would that my brother were here."

"So do I, my child."

"He may learn of this sooner than you will wish," retorted Captain Dermot, fiercely.

"Duty compels me to do what is far from pleasant. Colonel Morland, consider yourself our prisoner. Buck Logan, see that he is securely bound."

"That I will, captain."

"Oh, no—no!" cried Mara. Spare him."

In spite of her entreaties and his struggles, Caleb Morland was quickly seized and bound.

"Now a piece of rope, men. I'll see if they can't be brought to terms."

The rope was quickly forthcoming.

"Make a slipping noose in one end and put it around the old man's neck. There,

that's it. Now, Mara Morland, tell us where that infernal Yankee is hiding, or your grandfather swings from that window within one minute!"

CHAPTER V.

AS BRAVE AS SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL.

It was a startling tableau.

Colonel Morland looked pale and fearful. There was no pity in the looks of his captors. Though used to scenes of war, and he had served through the struggle of 1812, he was at a loss to account for his present treatment.

Mara, on whom the dark eyes of Captain Dermot were fixed, turned pale, though she did not lose her self-possession.

"Girl," he exclaimed, tersely, "where have you secreted that spy?"

"I deny your right to question me," she replied with flashing eyes.

A sardonic smile rested on his thin lips.

"Answer my question at once, girl, or the old man shall hang. Then we will tear the house down but we will find him. Men, I'll give her ten seconds to decide, and then if she persist in her madness drag the old scoundrel to the window where he shall hang——"

"Never!" cried the clear, sharp voice of the brave girl. "Dare to harm him and you die, Captain Dermot!"

She had suddenly drawn a pistol, and its gleaming muzzle stared the Confederate chief in the face.

He started back with a cry of terror.

Her beautiful countenance shone with excitement, but she gave no evidence of fear.

Her tone was calm and measured as she said:

"You see that I am in earnest, Captain Dermot, and the first move that is made signs your doom. I have undertaken to save the life of Curtis Remington and I will do it though it costs me my own."

A murmur of admiration went up from the spectators.

Before it had died away a crash was heard in the room and a portion of one of the walls fell to the floor.

The next moment, to the amazement of the Confederates, Cavalry Curt stood in their presence.

"I cannot allow this to continue," he said, firmly.

"Miss Morland, you have my heart felt thanks for your interference in my behalf. But I will relieve you of all further anxiety. Captain Dermot, since it is me that you want, I will surrender upon two conditions."

A wicked smile played upon the dark visage of the latter.

No one in the room was more surprised at the scout's appearance than Colonel Morland.

"What are those conditions, pray, Sir Yank?" sneered Dermot.

"First, that you leave these people in peace. They are not to blame for my presence here. Second, that I shall be treated as a prisoner of war."

"Of course we intend to do all that you have asked. So you will surrender? Men——"

"Hold! not too fast. Remember that I am not in your hands yet."

"I should like to know what stands between us."

"Your life!" was the cool reply.

"Have done with this fooling. Do you surrender or not? Girl, be careful how you handle that pistol."

"You promise that these people shall not be disturbed, sir?"

"I do."

"And that you will take me to your headquarters before your commander?"

"Of course."

"Then I give myself up as a prisoner of war."

It required no second bidding for the soldiers to secure so valuable a captive, and a minute later Cavalry Curt was in the power of his foes.

Colonel Morland had been freed, so that he breathed easier.

Mara looked on in silence, and though she had lowered the weapon she still held it in her hand.

"I hope you will lose nothing by your conduct to-day," said Captain Dermot, more in mockery, we suspect, than sincerity.

She offered no reply.

"Come, men," he continued, "we can afford to start for headquarters now. We have done a good day's work."

"Good-day, Colonel Morland; I am sorry for the treatment we were forced to give you, but it may learn you a lesson."

A minute later the party were mounting their horses.

Curt had whispered a kind good-bye to her who had so nobly defended him, as his captors bore him out of the room.

"Never fear for me," he said. "I am a soldier who is not afraid to die. Give my regards to Hal when you see him."

She would fain have spoken to him, but the Confederate chief pushed her rudely aside as he hurried past.

She stood at the window watching the cavalcade in their preparations to start, while in spite of herself tears came into her eyes.

Buck Logan returned to the room for

something he had forgotten, or at least pretended to have left.

Mara turned at the sound of his footsteps.

"What, in tears!" he exclaimed in surprise. "I thought you were too brave a girl for that."

"Oh, Mr. Logan, what will they do with him?"

"He is a spy and will have to meet the fate of a spy, I suppose. But I did not know he was your friend, Mara—Miss Morland."

"I never saw him until to-day, but he was a friend to Harry. He seems like a noble man."

"Well enough I dare say. But do not let your sympathy rob you of your reason. The boys are starting and I must not delay longer. I hope to see you again soon."

He had taken one of her hands in his and pressing it to his lips, he hastily left the room.

"Mara, I don't understand this," said Colonel Morland, turning to her as the horsemen rode away with the captive scout in their midst.

Not without some confusion did she tell him of the morning's adventures.

Half an hour later she laid her hand on his shoulder saying:

"Grandpa, I am going to Dalton."

"To Dalton?" he echoed. "What for, my child?"

"To save, if possible, the life of Curtis Remington."

"Nay, nay, child; you are insane now, to think of it."

Wild and impracticable as the venture seemed then, succeeding events not only made it possible but feasible and imperative as well; of this more anon.

CHAPTER VI.

TO DIE AT ONCE.

General J. E. Johnston, the commander of the Confederate forces in Georgia, at the head of forty-five thousand men, was entrenched at Dalton, lying in wait for the advancing troops of Sherman, then marching into this stronghold of the Confederacy from Chattanooga.

The last Confederate gunboat had been driven from the Mississippi and the great basin of the south and west was safe in Union keeping.

The great strength of the South now, was its inland armies, which were fed by the granaries and supported by the factories of Georgia.

Here were the great grain growing prairies which afforded the sustenance that an army requires

In the heart of the state, the center of a net-work of manufacturing cities and villages, was Atlanta, from which the army was supplied with powder, shot—in fact, all the appertenances of war.

Through Macon and Atlanta ran the great railroad lines between the eastern and the western Confederacy.

Georgia then was the Confederate stronghold.

To rend it assunder from mountain to sea as had been done in the Mississippi was the next work of the Northern troops.

The man called upon to undertake this herculean task was Sherman.

He had just performed his superb march of four hundred miles from Vicksburg to Chattanooga and added to this another hundred miles to Knoxville in season to relieve Burnside.

At the head of one hundred thousand men he was now at Ringgold, on the other side of the mountain, in direct line with Dalton and Atlanta biding his time of action.

To follow the fortunes of Cavalry Curt, however, we must go to the Confederate headquarters.

On the afternoon of the same day that witnessed the scout's capture, General Johnston, in company with subordinate officers, was in his tent busily examining a lot of charts and papers that lay before him.

"They are still impatient at Richmond for me to begin the offensive," said the commander after a pause, as he looked up from the documents, and reading for the third time the latest dispatch from the Confederate capital. "But I am no better prepared to do it than when I first declined to do so last Christmas. Their plans look well enough on paper, but put into actual practice must fail. Sherman's army more than double ours in number, and then he is fortified at the very apex of the two entrances into Georgia. The moment that I advance on either hand our rear is open to his attack. Once our supplies from Atlanta are cut off, we are lost. No," he continued thoughtfully, slowly shaking his head, "I dare not take the risk. Our wisest course is to draw the northern forces on as near to Atlanta as possible before we engage in regular battle with them. I am anxious—"

He was interrupted in the midst of his speech by the sound of a body of horsemen passing the tent.

"It is Captain Dermot's scouting squad," exclaimed one.

"And see, he has a prisoner," added another. "I truly believe it is the devil he went in quest of."

"Orderly, here; stop Captain Dermot. I wish to speak to him."

Captain Dermot, proud of his day's work, was only too glad to meet his superior, and he saluted him with an air of triumph.

"You have returned sooner than we expected, Captain Dermot. Whom have you there?"

"Cavalry Curt, General Johnston."

"Sherman's spy?"

"The same, general. The identical person, too, who was in our midst yesterday disguised as a Quaker farmer, and who made such a daring ride for freedom."

"We tracked him to the mountain, and this morning succeeded in effecting his capture, though I will say he is a good fighter."

"You have done well, Captain Dermot, and nobly won the commission promised you for his capture."

"Many thanks, General Johnston," replied the elated officer bowing low. "And if I may be so bold I would recommend my friend, Sergeant Logan, as deserving of favor. We owe our success in a great measure to him."

"I will remember your suggestion, major," giving the other for the first time his new rank.

"So this is Cavalry Curt," he continued, turning to the prisoner. "Ah, you hardly look like the reckless dare-devil you have been pictured; but from your present appearance I can see that you have been sorely driven. I suppose you realize your situation."

"Better perhaps than you, general," replied Curt speaking, for the first time, his cool, measured tone sending a thrill through the frames of his listeners.

"You are too brave a man to belong to the cause you have espoused," continued the Confederate commander. "Let me give you a chance to see yonder sun set."

"General Johnston," said the scout, quickly, comprehending the other's meaning, "I am brave enough to meet death but not brave enough to betray my country."

"My faith, but I like your appearance much. You shall have a commission if—"

"Pardon me, general, but here is a dispatch for you and a courier awaits your pleasure."

The commander took the packet from his orderly's hand, and with a nervous hand broke the seal,

"Sherman's army is on the move," he muttered under his breath. "Thomas is on a march to Buzzard's Gap. At last the campaign has opened and the time for more decisive action on our part has

come. Colonel Markham," turning to one of his subordinates, "I leave the fate of the prisoner in your hands. More important duties engage my attention. Have ten men detailed from your regiment placed under charge of a competent officer who shall see that the prisoner immediately meets the fate of a spy. Remember, colonel, immediately; for we know not how soon we may be obliged to move. Sherman has begun work."

"I will see that your orders are carried out to the letter, general."

CHAPTER VII.

PUT TO THE TEST.

Captain Morland was alone in his tent, when an orderly appeared at the door and handed him a paper.

We need not be told that he is Mara Morland's brother; there is a strong likeness between the two.

He is a manly-looking fellow who has entered heart and soul into the struggle for the Southern cause. He has already seen much of hard service and is ready for more.

Tearing open the paper he read:

HEADQUARTERS OF
FIFTH GEORGIA INF., C. S. A. }
May 6th, 1864. }

"Captain Morland:—Report to me at my quarters with a detail of ten men as soon as possible.

"PHILIP MARKHAM, Colonel."

"I wonder what is up now," he mused, preparing at once to obey his orders. "Something unusual I am certain that he summons me rather than Lieutenant Dodge.

His curiosity well aroused, Captain Morland acted very promptly.

"On hand with your usual alacrity, captain," greeted his superior. "I have a delicate task on call else I should not have selected you. You see our men have captured a troublesome fellow called Cavalry Curt, one of Sherman's spies. He is to be shot at sunset and the unpleasant duty has been assigned to you. See that there is no blunder in the proceedings. You will find him under guard down at the lower barracks. As soon as it is over report to me. By the way news have come that Sherman is beginning hostilities. It looks as if we might be called to the front at any moment. It is no time to harbor spies. Captain Morland, your duty is plain. I trust we can depend upon you for the work."

"You can, Colonel Markham, though I wish some one else might have been selected."

At the head of his squad Captain Morland repaired as rapidly as possible to the lower barracks, to find the guard with the prisoner anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"Is everything in readiness, sergeant," asked the captain, "we have no time to spare."

"A grave has been dug and there is no need for further delays. I resign the prisoner into your hands, Captain Morland."

"Very well; place the prisoner at the edge of the pit and measure off twenty yards. We must have this over as soon as possible."

Cavalry Curt sent a swift glance upon the Confederate captain as he spoke, and a low groan escaped his lips.

The next instant he turned his face away as if watching the setting sun.

He had recognized his former friend but the discovery only seemed to make his fate harder to bear.

"I hope Hal won't recognize me," he thought. "It will only make his duty the more difficult to perform."

Those who heard his groan attributed its utterance to a different cause than that which produced it.

"So your courage begins to fail you," said one of those whose duty it was to remove him to the fated post. "Well it will soon be over. Will you be blindfolded?"

"No—yes."

Cavalry Curt uttered the affirmative when the thought occurred to him that it would serve to hide his face.

But his voice had betrayed him.

Captain Morland turned his searching gaze upon him and their eyes met.

"Curt Remington!"

"Hal Morland!"

It was a strange meeting for old friends.

The scout was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I hoped you wouldn't recognize me, Hal. But do your duty. It is a poor soldier who is afraid to die."

"No—no! not that, Curt. My God, I did not dream of this. I have not forgot the debt that I owe you." How came you here?"

"I was caught as a spy. But see, the sun is setting. You jeopardize your own life by this delay. Once more I ask you to do your duty."

Captain Morland made a few swift passes which were quickly answered by the other.

"That settles it," he exclaimed with a

lighter countenance. "There isn't power enough in the South to compel me to do this deed."

Turning to the wondering soldiers he said:

"Boys, that man is a Freemason. So am I. They may do what they will to me, but I cannot see this work go on. I am bound by an oath that I cannot break to harm no one of the fraternity. Some one else must finish this work. For the present I order him to the guard-house. See that he does not escape. I will report to headquarters."

With a few passes made to the captive scout, which the others of course did not understand, he wheeled and started for the colonel's tent.

It would be difficult to describe Captain Morland's feeling as he presented himself to his superior.

"What, have you got over with it as soon as this, captain. I think you have outdone yourself this time."

"And you will have great reason for thinking so, Colonel Markham, when I ask to be released from this work, as I do."

"Wish to be released from the work?" exclaimed the other. "I never knew you to shirk from a duty before, Captain Morland. It was for that very reason I selected you of all others."

"Thank you, colonel, but for once I must prove faithless to your trust, even though I lose my commission by it. I am sorry it has happened."

"Explain yourself," was the impatient rejoinder.

"The prisoner is a Freemason and so am I. My oath forbids—"

"Oh! ho! so that is it. I see—I see!" exclaimed the astonished colonel. "We can make that all right, captain. I feared it was something else."

"I trust my loyalty is above suspicion, colonel."

"So it is; on my faith, it is. But what have you done with the prisoner?"

"I ordered him to the guard-house to be kept under strict surveillance."

"You did right. He will be safe there until morning. He shall be attended to then. I have just received an important notice from headquarters. Our brigade has been ordered to the relief at Buzzard's Gap and we are likely to receive marching orders at any moment. It looks as though we were in for hot work."

"Anything to break the monotony of this camp life," exclaimed Morland, "but I have a little business to look after, so you must excuse me, colonel."

"Certainly; only see that the boys are in readiness for a start. Good-evening."

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN MORLAND AGAIN SURPRISED.

"Some one to see you, Captain Morland," was the greeting he received upon reaching his tent.

Entering he saw a person standing in the center of the apartment as if anxiously awaiting his coming.

"Captain Morland, I believe," said the visitor.

"At your service, sir. I do not recognize you in the darkness, though your voice has a familiar ring."

"I would see you alone a few minutes, captain."

"Very well; I will give directions not to be disturbed. I will be back in a moment."

He soon returned closing the tent opening behind him.

"Will you please make known your errand?"

"Is it possible, brother," said the other lowly, "that my disguise is so complete you do not recognize me?"

Had a cannon-ball dropped at his feet Captain Morland could not have been more surprised.

"What! Mara! you here?"

"Hush! don't speak my name."

"But what does this mean? What has happened?"

Unheeding his questions she asked, catching him by the arm:

"Oh, Harry! have you seen him? Am I too late?"

Again he started with surprise, but in a moment he comprehended her meaning.

"You refer to Curtis Remington. I have seen him."

"And—and he lives?"

Her tone was hardly audible.

"Yes."

"I am so glad. Is he safe?"

"Until morning."

"He must be saved!"

"Alas! I fear it is impossible. But tell me how you came here. I am in a fog."

In a few words she told of the morning's adventure; and then how she, disguised, had succeeded in reaching the place after running the gantlet of detection.

"I felt it my duty to do something to save him. I feared you would not know of his being here. So I have come."

"But you have run a fearful risk."

"Do not speak of that. But tell me what can be done for him."

Captain Morland quickly acquainted her with the particulars of the postponed execution.

"It is an unpleasant turn of affairs,"

he said in conclusion, "but no more than one must be prepared to meet in the fortunes of war. Curt is a spy and a dreaded foe to our cause. I love him as a brother, but am powerless to help him. God knows I would gladly save him if I could."

She wrung her hands in agony.

"And you are sure that he will be shot to-morrow?"

"As certain as I am that the sun will rise. But, Mara, this is weak in you. He is not the only one——"

"I know—I know, brother. But I—I love him! I am willing to give my life to save him!"

She reeled to and fro as if she would fall.

"This is weak in you, Mara," he said, folding her to his breast. "Come, put him from your mind; and in the morning you must return home. Grandfather—hark! there is the bugle-call. We have had marching orders. I must go. Our brigade is ordered to Buzzard's Gap."

Pressing a hurried kiss upon her brow, he gently put her from him.

"It is hard to leave you, but I must. Stay here to-night and start for home in the morning," he said. "You will be careful of yourself, Mara, won't you?"

"Yes, yes, Harry. Oh, this is dreadful."

"Be brave—ha! I mustn't tarry longer. Good-bye."

Another kiss and he was gone.

Mara Morland pressed her hands to her temples in a dazed, bewildered state of mind.

Then she suddenly started up.

"What have I done?" she asked herself. He is gone and I have told him nothing. God forgive me that I should so far have forgotten my duty. These tears will become the garb that I wear. I thought that I had more self-control. I wonder if he is gone? He said to Buzzard's Gap. That is a part of Sherman's design. His plans are working well. I must act ere it is too late."

While speaking thus she was brushing the tear drops from her eyes.

As soon as she had somewhat gained control of herself she peered out of the tent.

All was bustle and excitement.

"It is no use to look for him now. I must go to the commander's headquarters."

Acting upon this thought she boldly left the tent.

No one seemed to notice her and she breathed easier as she hurried on her way.

At last to her relief the quarters of General Johnston was reached.

The commander, however, was very busy and she had to wait what seemed to her a long time.

She was glad that it was night for in the semi-darkness she escaped in part the scrutinous gaze of the lookers-on.

"Come, there is no time to spare if you must speak to the commander," exclaimed the brusque orderly at last.

"General, some one to see you who will not take 'No' for an answer."

With high-beating heart Mara advanced into the presence of the impatient chief.

CHAPTER IX.

MARA MORLAND'S MISSION.

If it was General Johnston's aim to draw the Northern troops as near as possible to Atlanta before engaging in the culminating battle, General Sherman, on the other hand, was equally as anxious to meet his foe at an early day and as far from the Confederate arsenal as it might be. Could he shatter Johnston's army, as he felt confident of doing, his march to the sea would be simply a "walk over."

The great mountain system of East Tennessee outstretched like a giant arm into the heart of the Confederacy.

Leaving Chattanooga, the natural bastion on the lines of the Georgian communication, Sherman paused at Ringgold, and from this place inaugurated his grand strategic movement.

Through Rocky Face Mountain from the latter place ran a narrow ravine affording the only passage to the eastern valley, on the one hand, and along whose rocky bottom wound the highway and railroad to Dalton.

At the mouth of this valley, called Buzzard's Roost Gap, Johnston had erected strong defenses by planting his batteries on the rocky spurs of the mountain sides. To make his position doubly certain he had flooded the ravine by dams in the creek.

This position but illustrated Johnston's entire situation, and Sherman's practical eye saw that to drive him from his craggy citadel he must make a detour to the south and cut off his communication with Atlanta.

This task was assigned to McPherson. Thomas meanwhile, to hold the Confederates attention in that direction, was to actually storm Buzzard's Gap.

Schofield was to march against the enemy's right flank thus adding to the deception of Thomas' attack.

The purpose in view, however, was for McPherson to reach Reseca, a place

about twenty miles south of Dalton, and there fall upon the railroad thus cutting off the Confederate's supplies.

Intrenching himself there McPherson was to wage war upon Johnston in flank until he would be obliged to turn to grapple with him, when the rear would be open to Thomas and Schofield.

Johnston had received intelligence of the contemplated attack on Buzzard's Gap as has been shown. Sherman's real intentions were as yet unknown to him.

We have been thus particular in stating the situation to show the importance of Mara Morland's mission to Johnston's quarters on that evening.

"Well, what is your business, sir?" asked General Johnston, without looking up from the chart that he was examining, as Mara in her disguise stood before him.

"Important, sir, if I mistake not. I am the bearer of a message from Boyd Wyman."

"Boyd Wyman!" exclaimed the general quickly looking up. "Where is he?"

"At the home of Colonel Morland, sir. He is wounded and could not come."

"So that accounts for his continued absence. I sent him to learn if possible Sherman's projected plans. I had begun to fear that some mischance had overtaken him."

"He barely escaped with his life, sir; and reached our place this morning unable to go further. Here are the papers, sir, he requested me to hand you."

General Johnston eagerly took the packet and tearing it open was soon perusing its contents.

Mara saw his countenance change as he read on, and the hand that held the paper trembled.

"Well, well," he broke forth at last, "this puts a new phase on the matter. Had I known this an hour earlier my plans would have been laid differently. But better late than never. We have time enough to reach there. Mr. Morland, for that is the name Wyman gives you, you have done us a great service. Any favor I can do you?"

"I would like a pass, sir, so that I can return home."

"Certainly, and bear my good wishes to Wyman."

"Thank you. And—and if it is not asking too much," stammered Mara, "I would like permission to visit Curtis Remington, the captive spy."

Her heart seemed to stop its beating as she waited for his reply.

The general looked up with a frown.

"I don't know about that. He was to have been shot at sunset, but some one blundered. Do you know him?"

"I knew him at one time."

"I see no harm in granting your request, and in consideration of the service you have done us, I will."

Seizing pen and paper he began to hurriedly write.

"Your full name, please."

"Mara Morland."

She could have bitten her tongue out for giving utterance to the name. But it was just as well. "Mara" seemed as appropriate for a man as a woman.

"There you are," declared the commander, handing her two slips of paper; "good-evening."

Glad to get away so easy, she passed out of the tent.

Johnston, now familiar with the enemy's plans immediately held a council with some of his subordinate officers.

Leaving him to prepare for a meeting with McPherson at Reseca we will follow the fortunes of Mara Morland.

The uppermost thought in her mind now was to rescue Cavalry Curt.

No one knew better than she the peril of the undertaking, and a less brave heart would have shrunk from the attempt.

But one course seemed open to her and she resolved to carry it out.

It was too early in the night, however, for the work to be begun so she sauntered toward her brother's tent, watchful of all that was transpiring around her.

Passing one of the camp-fires she heard loud voices, and coupled with other names she fancied she heard her own.

Advancing in a listless manner she got within hearing without attracting attention.

The party was composed of a portion of Captain Dermot's scouting squad.

She saw Lieutenant Logan, easily distinguished by his long, flaxen hair among them.

He was speaking.

She held her breath at the sound of his voice.

"Yes, she is true grit every time. I admired her spunk and I didn't like her course of action."

"Think she is spoony on the Yank?"

"Looks like it. But I tell you those Morlands are going to get into trouble, if they ain't already, over that spy. The captain's course this afternoon was shameful."

"S'pose they'll shoot the spy in the morning?"

"Of course; and I should like the job. Reckon they wouldn't find me a Freemason—ha—ho! That's the best joke I have heard lately."

"Is it true the colonel has sent a man up to old Morland's?"

"Yes; he smells a rat somewhere.

Leastways the major does, and he has put him up to it."

"By the way the captain fills his new rank well."

Hearing nothing more of interest to her, Mara finally turned away to seek Captain Morland's tent.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIZARD SCOUT.

As Mara came in sight of her brother's tent she saw some one pacing slowly back and forth before its entrance.

Advancing boldly she drew nearer until he turned at the sound of her approach and pausing in his beat coolly faced her.

His long, flowing hair and beard was white with the frosts of many years.

His tall form, however, gave no indication of the weight of years that it bore.

His eyes, too, retained all the fire of youth. Ay, from out of their depths flashed at times the light which told plainly of the slumbering flame of insanity.

"I knew you would come here," he said, calmly.

"But—I do not know you," exclaimed Mara in alarm, glancing toward a group of soldiers just beyond.

"Nor need you marvel at that," replied the stranger, lowly. "I know every man in the Confederate army, but no one knows me! Nor would they recognize me if they did. The tent is vacated now; come in."

She might do worse than to obey.

"You are on a dangerous errand, young woman," were his first words.

She started with a low exclamation of fear.

"Do not be alarmed," he hasten to say.

"I will be more careful how I speak. You have nothing to fear from me. You are cleverly disguised. It is to warn you that I am here."

"Pray who are you?"

"They call me Old Fatality. But that is only a name synonymous with my work, you know. All other names are misnomers, however, so away with them. You have been rash in coming here when your own home is in jeopardy. You are needed there, even now. Is the life of a stranger dearer to you than the loved ones at home?"

She was silent, perplexed, bewildered.

"I understand," he went on. "You have come here in the cause of your state. By your heroic conduct you have averted the disaster that hangs over the army of Georgia. But its downfall is surely com-

ing. You will live to regret that you lent your arm to its support. Your heart should be wholly with your patriot lover. But I am detaining you here when you should be on your homeward journey. Even now all that you hold dear on earth is under the ban. Within a week you will be alone—friendless and hopeless."

"Sir, begone!" she exclaimed. "Who are you who dares to breathe the breath of treason?"

It was too dark for either to see the other's face plainly, but both were greatly excited.

Mara stood with extended arm.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "I have only your good at heart. See, I am going."

He went as far as the edge of the tent and peered cautiously out.

The excitement of the camp scene had somewhat died away.

With a hasty glance he took in the view, when to the surprise of Mara, he rapidly returned to her side.

"Be calm," he said in a tone hardly above a whisper. "You have come to rescue Cavalry Curt! So have I! Listen to my directions and it shall be well. You can trust me."

More surprised than ever Mara bowed her head.

"You have a pass for him?"

"Yes."

"Then go boldly down to his place of confinement and demand an entrance. The guard will pass you. Let the prisoner don this suit of gray," handing her a bundle that he carried under his cloak. Together then leave the place. I will be on guard when you come out. Be bold and it shall be well with you and him. Separate at once. Do you then go home with all speed possible. Do you understand?"

She could hardly credit his words.

"You can trust me," he declared seeing her hesitation. "If you have any doubt ask Cavalry Curt if he knows the Wizard of the Army."

At the mention of that name she gazed upon him spellbound. Could she be really gazing upon the wonderful man whose startling reputation had reached even her mountain home?

"I have heard of you," she murmured.

"I stopped at your house once when crossing the mountains. In spite of your disguise I recognized you by your voice as soon as you spoke. I never forget a voice. You can trust me?"

"Yes."

"Good. Wait an hour; then go ahead. You will find me ready to do my part."

He was moving away, when she caught him by the arm.

"You will see Cavalry Curt when he has escaped?"

"Without doubt."

"A favor then, please."

"It is granted."

"You will not mention my name to him? He must not know that I helped him to get free."

"Ha! I see. Your secret is safe with me."

The next moment he disappeared from sight.

Time passed slowly enough to Mara as she waited for the hour to wear away.

Nothing new occurred to awaken her interest.

As she pondered over the events of the evening she wondered more and more over the unexpected appearance of the Wizard Scout.

Who was he? From whence had he come? and how had he learned of her presence there?

Then too his fearful warning—must she put credence in that? The thought startled her.

She had heard of him before—had heard that he was mad.

Were this the fact, could she depend upon his assistance in the rescue of Cavalry Curt?"

The more she reviewed her situation, the more she became entangled in the web of mystery and doubt.

The time for action came at last and she resolved to hazard the desperate venture.

Not without many misgivings did she start on her perilous mission.

"'Tis his life or mine!" she murmured under her breath.

Running the guntlet of others, Mara at last reached the guard who stood on duty over the captive scout.

"A permission to see Cavalry Curt?"

"Who from, mister?"

"General Johnston."

"Sho! so 'tis. Genuine, by Jeff. Git 'long and be lively."

Glad to pass so easily Mara entered the doomed spy's quarters.

He was lying upon the bare earth as if asleep when she entered, to quickly look up at sight of her.

"Is this Cavalry Curt?" she asked in a low tone.

"They call me by that name sometimes."

"I need not ask if you are anxious to escape from your present plight."

Her tone was low and her calmness surprised herself.

"Hardly. Who are you?"

"A friend. Let me prove it."

No sooner had she spoken than she cut the ligatures that bound him.

"May heaven bless you," he murmured, starting to his feet, to find his limbs so cramped and benumbed that it was some time before he could stand.

"Here, don this suit of gray. It will help you escape detection. I will see that no one enters."

Cavalry Curt quickly made the change.

"I am ready," he whispered. "But how are we to run the guard?"

"Follow me closely."

"Into the jaws of death though it be," replied the scout through his clinched teeth. I wish I were armed."

"Take this," and Mara thrust a revolver into his hand.

"Thanks. Lead on. I am impatient to get out of this place."

"Come."

But Mara's heart sank within her as they reached the door.

The same sentry was on duty as had been when she entered the building.

The Wizard Scout had failed to do his part.

CHAPTER XI.

WAS HE MAD?

This was the first thought that flashed through her mind.

She hesitated.

Was it fancy or did the guard beckon her to come?

It was too late to turn back.

She rapidly advanced, with Cavalry Curt beside her.

To her joy the sentry merely glancing up allowed them to pass.

"We must separate now," said Mara a minute later. "I trust you will have no further trouble."

"Have no fear for me. But to whom am I indebted for this kind act?"

"To the Wizard Scout," replied Mara, and the next instant he was alone.

"A strange man," mused Cavalry Curt. "But I have no time to waste in speculation. As I am not needed here I must start for the general's headquarters. He will think I am a tardy errand-boy."

But Cavalry Curt was not on his own footing yet.

In the very heart of the enemy's encampment it was no easy matter to run the gantlet of his foes.

His disguise, however, seemed sufficient, for few had seen his face.

Again, he was familiar with every red of the country.

With full confidence in his ability to escape he coolly followed his course.

The boom of cannon was heard in the distance, coming from the direction of Rocky Face Mountain.

It told that the fight at Buzzard's Roost Gap had begun,

"I am more needed at Reseca," he mused. "Thither will I shape my course. Ha! as I live Johnston is sending troops to that place. He has discovered Sherman's ruse. I wonder if McPherson will fall into the trap. I—it is a risky undertaking, but I am in for it. I—"

"Helloa, Charley," exclaimed some one breaking in upon his thoughts, "ain't your regiment going to Reseca?"

The speaker had stepped from one of the tents near at hand.

"Hang it, yes," growled Curt in a disguised tone, instantly adapting himself to the new situation. "And I'm in a deuced of a fix."

"I thought the 20th was going. What's the trouble?"

"My equipments are down to the barracks. I just stepped into Jackson's mess. Let me take your gun. Quick or I shall be too late. The last call has sounded."

"Well, here's your shooter. Tell me how many Yanks you kill. I wish I was going. I've got—"

But Cavalry Curt stopped to hear no more.

Snatching the gun from the other's hands he started on a run toward the troops.

"The 20th," he panted of a corporal.

"To the right, sir."

Watching his opportunity he fell into the ranks and a few minutes later was marching with the Confederates on toward Reseca.

In less than half an hour he had escaped from the guard-house and with a recklessness of spirit that characterized his conduct had joined the Southern ranks.

Wild as the move seemed it proved to have been the very best he could have made.

In less than another half hour the news of his escape flew over the encampment like wildfire.

His name was on every lip and an exciting search was made for him.

For a time at least he was safe from them.

One other little incident deserves our attention before we turn to record the fortunes of Mara Moorland.

It may have been two hours after the escape of Cavalry Curt was discovered that General Johnston was startled by the appearance of an old man in his tent.

He had forbidden anyone to enter and was trying to get a little rest which he was so much in need of.

"What means this intrusion?" he asked starting up.

"Nothing—noth-ing—no-thing—no-thing—no-thing—no-thing—I must see you."

"Orderly Knox——"

The strange visitor stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"Don't trouble yourself, general, I'm Old Fatality and I thought——"

General Johnston repeated the name in a husky tone.

"Yes; I am Old Fatality," the other went on, unheeding the commander's discomfiture; "and though my errand is not a pleasant one it is none the less——"

"Orderly Knox——"

"Stop, general! three ain't company!"

One of the general's aides entered the tent.

"What is it, general?"

"Put that man out. He is disturbing me. How dared you let him in?"

"How in the dickens did he get in? Mercy me, it is the mad wizard! Come along here, old man; you are not wanted here."

"Of course I ain't. Misfortune ain't wanted anywhere; but you have to take what the Lord sends, don't you? I have taken the trouble to come here and I am going to stay with you—my spirit if not my body. I was with Beauregard at Shiloh, with Pemberton at Vicksburg, with Bragg at Chattanooga and—you know the result. I am sorry for you, General Johnston, for you are worthy of a better cause than which has led you into the field, but defeat is as sure to be your portion as night is to follow day. Adieu."

As silently as a shadow he passed out, the spectators unable to throw off the spell which he had thrown over them by his burning words and wild manner.

When they did recover their self-possession enough to look for him he was gone as silently and mysteriously as he had appeared.

Though no one may have believed his words they were never forgotten; and later on they were recalled with a startling distinctness.

CHAPTER XII.

WARLIKE SCENES.

Fortunately for Mara Morland she had passed the pickets before the discovery of Cavalry Curt's escape.

We doubt if she would have succeeded in doing so then.

The night was clear starlight and she had no difficulty in following the way.

She was mounted on the same horse she had ridden in coming to Dalton and it was barely two hours ride to her home.

A part of her journey lay on the road to Buzzard's Gap.

Anxious to reach home Mara was riding at a smart canter when she fancied she heard the sound of hoof-strokes behind her.

Thinking nothing strange of this she kept on her way at her former rate of speed.

The sounds continued and even grew plainer, until she was aware that not one rider but several horsemen were following her.

"It must be a skirmishing party," she thought, "or it may be troops going to Buzzard's Gap."

Whichever case it might be she had no desire to be seen so she urged her horse on a faster gait—faster and faster until she fairly flew along the way.

Still to her surprise the horsemen seemed to come nearer.

Surprise soon gave place to alarm for she felt now that she was pursued.

Just as she was coming to this conclusion she reached the point where she must turn from the Buzzard's Gap road in order to reach her home.

This then would prove the test. If the riders kept straight on she need have no further fear. If not—she dared not contemplate the worst.

She heard them reach the forks of the road, and for a moment she thought they passed on; and then a low exclamation escaped her lips as she realized that her worst fears were stern facts.

The horsemen were in earnest pursuit of her!

The road now was more broken and her progress was slower.

She was a good rider, but her horse was no match for those in pursuit.

She had gone perhaps a couple of miles further when a loud shout attracted her attention, and looking back she saw her pursuers in plain sight!

The foremost was waving something in the air, as if motioning for her to stop.

At first thought she was inclined to do so, but something in their manner seemed to tell her that their presence boded her no good:

Their shouts were like those of a mad-dened mob rather than the words of friends.

With her white face set despairingly toward home she swept wildly on.

Her long hair broke from its confinement, to stream in the night air, adding to the wildness of her appearance.

Over the hills and through the valleys she flew, the clatter of her enemies in pursuit growing plainer and nearer.

Then shots were fired while the bullets flew uncomfortably near.

But one thought was in her mind now. Could she reach home?

Ever and anon she glanced wildly back, and every time her hopes sank lower.

"Hold up there if you value your life!" thundered the leader of the horsemen.

His words only served to make her urge her failing horse on to greater exertions.

The next moment her home burst into view.

Notwithstanding the hour she saw a light at its windows.

A murmured thanksgiving escaped her lips.

"Almost there!" she exclaimed.

A minute later she rode furiously into the yard.

Reining up her foam-flecked horse in front of the door she sprang from the saddle just as her grandfather appeared in the doorway with a light in his hand.

"What has happened?" he cried, excitedly.

"I am pursued! Oh, save me!" she panted, falling exhausted on the threshold.

With a cry almost human the steed she had ridden staggered forward and fell at the old man's feet in the throes of death!

At the same instant the horsemen dashed upon the scene.

"What, ho! there!" cried the leader. "It is a long race that has no end!"

"What does this mean?" asked Colonel Morland, trembling like an aspen leaf.

"We are after Cavalry Curt! He has made a bold dash for freedom. Stand aside, old man, if you value your life!"

"No—no! you shall not harm her!" cried the old soldier, bending over Mara, who was just opening her eyes.

"Are you hurt, my child?"

"No; but see they are coming. Back—back, every man of you! I am armed!"

She had gained her feet and like a tigress at bay faced them.

Some of the party had dismounted and were advancing.

"Yes, keep back! keep back!" warned Colonel Morland with both arms outstretched.

"Great King! he is a woman!" exclaimed one of the horsemen, as he saw Mara's long hair falling down her neck and shoulders.

"Woman or devil," cried the leader, "seize her. She is Cavalry Curt; or the one in league with him."

Mara was armed and she had so far recovered her self-possession as to bid defiance to them.

"She means business," ejaculated the foremost of the would-be captors.

"Fire and furies!" roared the chief,

urging his horse forward to the front of his men, "we——"

But Mara's ringing tone checked his speech.

"Advance another step at the peril of your life."

"Traitors!" hissed the others, "your lives shall pay for this."

"Explain your errand," said Colonel Morland, again speaking. "My doors are open to the al——"

"Old man, lie. By your side stands as great a traitor as you ever knew. We want him or her as the case may be and we——"

The sharp report of a rifle suddenly drowned his speech.

With a low groan Colonel Morland sank to the floor.

"You have killed him! You have killed him!" moaned Mara, falling upon her knees beside him.

The Confederate chief looked amazed.

"Who fired that shot?" he inquired.

No one answered.

At that moment, too, a new actor appeared on the scene.

It was the scout, Boyd Wyman, who, wounded, had remained at her home while Mara had gone on her perilous mission to Dalton.

He moved with the greatest difficulty, but succeeded in reaching the doorway.

"What have you done?" he cried, sharply.

"It was a dastardly shot!" he went on as no one replied.

Mara was weeping bitterly.

"Who are you?" queried the chief.

"Boyd Wyman; and I can vouch for these people's loyalty even as I can my own."

"It is Boyd Wyman!" averred one of the soldiers. "They said he was wounded and stopping up here."

"Is the old man seriously hurt?" asked the leader, moving in his seat uneasily.

"Yes," replied the scout; "he has received his death wound."

"I am sorry, for we meant him no harm. Who is that beside him?"

"Mara Morland, his grand-daughter. She has just returned from Dalton where she has been to bear dispatches for me, as I have got a chunk of lead in my leg and cannot walk. But what means this piece of unwarranted work? You have the old man's life to answer for."

"We were after Cavalry Curt," replied the other, doggedly. "He has escaped, and that chap by the old man helped him to do it."

"You know better; but go your way and leave peaceful folks alone. You have done mischief enough already."

"It ain't come out just as I expected.

Reckon though we'll keep an eye on this place. Sergeant Goodale, I will leave ten men here under your charge as guards, see that no one leaves it. You will be held accountable for every life here."

"Yes, captain. Reckon we shan't sleep on our post."

"I can trust you. Boyd Wyman, will you go to Dalton with us?"

"I couldn't ride that distance to save my life. Even if I could, I feel it my duty to stay here."

"Just as you choose."

Without more delay, after detailing ten of his followers to remain with Sergeant Goodale, Captain Buck, with the rest of his party, headed toward Dalton.

CHAPTER XIII.

BETRAYED!

Johnston in fortifying himself at Dalton had not overlooked the possible need of an avenue of retreat or removal to some other position.

Accordingly he had repaired the roads leading into the different quarters of the surrounding country; and wherever his astute mind had deemed it expedient he had opened new passages.

This enabled him to move about with facility, divide or unite his forces as he chose, and made his capture more difficult.

In the whole history of the war we know of no instance where two officers were so evenly and squarely pitted against each other as far as individual characteristics were concerned as were Sherman and Johnston.

Either was as well prepared for the defeat of his plans as for their success, nor did victory unduly elate him.

Each had an eye to his surroundings and was continually calling into acquisition the advantage offered by the surface of the country.

The march to Reseca was performed with the ease and rapidity that marked the Confederate commander's entire campaign.

Cavalry Curt, we remember, had actually entered the rebel ranks, and leaving Mara Morland in her grief and hopeless condition we must, in order to keep along with the occurrence of events, turn to narrate the scout's checkered fortunes.

Warned of Sherman's premeditated attack by McPherson upon Reseca under cover of an assault in Buzzard Roost led by Thomas, and Schofield's march toward Dalton, Johnston had on the fifteenth of May ordered Canty's cavalry to that place.

Soon after its arrival this skirmishing brigade had become engaged with the advance columns of the Northern troops to be driven back.

McPherson thus unexpectedly met by the foe, whom he had hoped to find asleep, halted.

Thus the two forces were looking and waiting for each other to move, neither knowing the other's strength, when on the evening of the ninth three divisions of Johnston's infantry marched to the succor of the threatened town.

The arrival of the re-inforcements was the signal for rejoicing, and plans were quickly laid for more hostile movements.

That the enemy's position and actual resources as to numbers, armament, etc., might be more definitely known a squad of six under one Lieutenant Boggs was detailed to reconnoiter the field.

Cavalry Curt to his infinite satisfaction was one of the scouts.

Once outside the picket line the scouts moved cautiously, yet swiftly forward, the sense of each man strained to catch the least sound or to detect the slightest movement upon the night scene.

The sky was overcast with a thin lining of clouds, so that it was quite dark in the deeper forests. In a couple of hours the moon would rise to dispel somewhat the gloom.

As silently as so many shadows the little party threaded the dim aisle of the valley lying on the west of the town.

Not a word was spoken and nothing was heard to alarm them, until at last they stood at the edge of a clearing of several acres in extent.

Lieutenant Boggs motioning a halt, they paused under the shadows of the trees.

"I have an idea the Yanks are off to the right," he said, speaking for the first time.

"More'n likely," assented one of the others.

Cavalry Curt started at the sound of the last speaker's voice. He was too well schooled in his self-possession, however, to betray any surprise, though he improved the first opportunity to get a good, square look at the man.

He had recognized the tone as that of one whom he had at one time known.

The countenance was that of the person.

He had at one time belonged to Kearney's cavalry, but had disappeared very suddenly and was supposed to have been killed.

Curt's most natural conclusion was that he was acting a part as well as himself.

Though altered in appearance since

their last meeting he felt certain the other would recognize him as soon as he should get a fair view of his face.

Always careful to be on the safe side the spy resolved not to discover his identity to the other, but to maintain a careful watch over himself.

He could not help feeling that the man had deserted the Union cause.

In that case his own position was a critical one.

"Don't believe but we had better go round the clearing," declared Lieutenant Boggs. "I kalkilate we have got to look mighty sharp, for we are likely to run on the Yanks at any step. Foller me."

With this terse command he led the way through the forest, the others following closely upon his heels in Indian fashion.

They had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile in this way, when Lieutenant Boggs paused abruptly.

Bending his head forward in a listening attitude, after a minute's anxious wait, he said:

"I though I heard some step. But I must have been mistaken. Isn't that a building over yonder on the swell?"

"I should say so," replied one of his companions.

"I have a mind to go up there."

"My eye has been on that pine tree for some time. What a view one could get from its top? Let's go up a little nearer anyway."

They soon came in plain sight of a large, old-fashioned farm-house with out-buildings adjoining, the whole looking deserted and sadly out of repair.

The buildings stood on the crest of quite an eminence of land.

On one side reaching nearly down to the woods where they were concealed extended a line of dense shrubbery.

A short distance from the house, its dark, gigantic branches overhanging the roof was a huge pine towering far above any other tree in the vicinity.

It was this tree Lieutenant Boggs wished to reach, knowing that from its summit he could look down upon a wide circle of the surrounding country.

Without losing any time he swiftly, yet silently advanced toward the forsaken buildings, being careful to keep under the cover of the trees.

His followers closely imitated his example, and a few minutes later, without having met with any renewed cause of alarm, they gained the summit.

Under the giant pine Lieutenant Boggs ordered a halt.

"One of us had better climb the tree. If I mistake not, from its top the camp of the Yanks will be in plain view. You

are the man to do it," he concluded, turning to Cavalry Curt.

The words in themselves were innocent enough, but they were no sooner spoken than the scout instantly interpreted a double meaning.

He saw Lieutenant Boggs and the deserter exchange significant glances, and all at once it flashed through his mind that his identity had been discovered!

He had been betrayed!

It was evidently a part of the plans of his foes to get him into the tree, where he would be at their mercy.

A hurried glance around showed that there was no way for him to escape.

He must either climb the tree or refuse to obey the order. In the latter case he would only hasten the crisis without bringing any especial benefit to himself.

He was in a tight place.

CHAPTER XIV.

TREED!

"Come, why don't you obey orders?" growled Lieutenant Boggs, as Cavalry Curt hesitated a moment.

"Dauged if I see just how I am going to get up to that first limb," muttered the scout. "I never was much of a climber," and he started around the tree, obviously to find a way to ascend its trunk, but really to test the intentions of his companions.

No sooner had he moved than their rifles were half-raised and they seemed ready to spring upon him. He no longer doubted their purpose. Neither did he delay further in his course of action.

"We'll show you a way to get your lubberly carcas up there if you don't try for yourself pretty lively," exclaimed the lieutenant, impatiently.

"If some of you will just give me a boost I guess I can get up here," declared Curt.

With the assistance of a couple of the others he was enabled to reach the first branch when he slowly drew himself up until he had gained its support.

Glancing over his shoulder he saw that the squad had covered him with their guns, and that Lieutenant Boggs was smiling triumphantly.

Without seeming to notice their hostile movement, however, Cavalry Curt continued his ascent of the pine.

Feeling confident of their game the Confederates allowed him to go up higher until his form began to fade from sight.

"We can take him as he comes down," said Boggs. "Look sharp for him, boys."

This was spoken in an undertone which of course did not reach the scout's ears, though he knew well enough their intentions.

Higher and higher he rapidly ascended the tree, until at last he was near the top.

Parting the thick branches he gazed out upon the surrounding country scene for several miles in the clear starlight. Had it been daylight he might have seen distinctly a wide panorama of scenery.

As he had expected to do he gazed upon the tents of an encampment of the Federal troops. He knew well enough it was McPherson's corps lying in wait, undecided as yet whether to move boldly upon Reseca or to retreat.

The forces were but a few miles away and fixing the direction in his mind he began to look around him for some avenue of escape, knowing that he had but a few minutes in which to act.

Peering down through the matted branches he saw that the Confederates were listlessly waiting his movements. At the least cause for alarm they would be active enough, though evidently they felt certain of their prey.

As we have already told the pine stood near to the house, so near in fact that Cavalry Curt had noticed that its branches touched the building.

Particularly were they thick together and long at a point objective to the chamber windows. Here was where the scout hoped to escape.

Without stopping to take more than a hasty survey from his lofty perch Curt, leaving his slouched hat so it might be seen by those below, cautiously began to descend, hugging closely to the tree.

Swiftly yet silently he retraced his course until he stood on the branch that, reaching around the corner of the dwelling, had boldly pushed its way through one of the windows.

Hearing nothing as yet from his enemies to alarm him, he glided out along the branch concealed by the matted growth of boughs above and below.

"Helioa!" called out Lieutenant Boggs, cautiously, when he was about midway in the passage, "what do you see?"

Of course Curt made no reply—only quickened his progress knowing that his time would soon be up.

"I say where are you?" called out Boggs a little louder, as he listened in vain for an answer to his first call.

"Hang the fool! why don't he speak!" muttered the officer. Then louder than before he called out:

"Are you going to keep us here all night? Come down at once."

At this moment Curt's hand touched

the window-sill, when with the agility of a cat he noiselessly drew himself forward allowing the branch to sway back to its normal position as gently as possible.

Still the Confederate received no reply to his appeal and he began to grow first uneasy, then furious.

"He is clean, clear to the top," declared one of his followers, "I can just see his head between the branches. P'raps he don't hear you, for he don't move."

"I'll send a chunk of lead up there if he don't stir pretty soon," growled Boggs. "Reckon that'll fetch him."

The night seemed unusually quiet, and not a sound followed his words.

Curt had gained the house and stood within its walls.

"Look here, you infernal Yank!" called out Boggs louder than before, "if you don't come down we'll riddle you with bullets! We have waited long enough and its time for you to know that your game is up!"

Of course he received no reply and he stamped the ground madly, regardless of the danger he was courting, forgetting that he might have enemies within hearing.

"He don't move," whispered the soldier. "Shall I fire at him?"

"Curses upon our stupidity, no. It would wake up the whole army of Yanks. Let me speak to the dog once more!"

Again he called out to the scout with, as might be expected, no better result.

"One of you must go up there," said Lieutenant Boggs. "Who will do it?"

Not one of the little group volunteered to do so.

"He's a desperate chap," ventured one; "and as he's above he's going to have us at a disadvantage. I don't care to tackle him alone, I allow."

"Bah!" retorted Boggs, "you are a coward."

He shirked the undertaking himself, however.

"Perhaps it would be safer for three to go up," he said a minute later. "Can the dog have mistrusted our plan?"

"Hark! what was that?" exclaimed one of the soldiers as a loud crash from within the house broke the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER XV.

TURNING THE TABLES.

In a moment the little squad were on the alert.

No sound, however, followed the crash which seemed like the concussion of a falling body.

"Some one is in the house!" whispered Boggs, whose stock of courage never was great, was fast leaving him.

"Let's go in and see," ventured one of the others with less fear.

"We mustn't leave the tree without a guard to see that the Yank does not get off. Jones and Monkton, do you keep a close watch over that spy while the rest of us explore the old building. Come on, boys; and mind that you keep your eyes open."

With these words he led the way toward the open door.

It was dark and still within. Not without many misgivings did Lieutenant Boggs enter the deserted abode. Every footstep gave back a loud, creaking noise and he fancied that all kinds of creatures were in the place. A bat, started from its retreat by the nocturnal disturbers of its peace, flew uncomfortably near to his head.

He crossed the first apartment closely followed by the others, to enter an adjoining room even darker than the first if that were possible.

Unknown to them the eagle eyes of the scout were watching their movements from the second floor.

Alike unseen and unheard by either friend or foe another with catlike steps was tracking the Confederates.

Then as he crossed the threshold of the inner apartment the scout caught sight of his tall, powerful form. He started with surprise for even in the semi-darkness he had recognized the Wizard Scout!

Here then was help he had little expected—an arm that was worth a dozen ordinary men.

Until then Curt had thought only of escape for himself. Finding that he had an ally in the field, a bold, daring scheme entered his head.

Lieutenant Boggs and his party, however, had come to a sudden halt.

"Hist!" exclaimed he. "I heard something move in the corner yonder."

His followers quickly came to a standstill, when an oppressive silence hung over the lonely scene.

"Man or devil, come forth!" challenged Boggs, trying to appear calm though he was trembling with fear.

No reply was made by word or move.

The Wizard Scout stood in the darkness grimly watching them.

"'Twas nothing!" exclaimed the boldest of the squad. "The first sound we heard was but the branches of the pine striking against, the side of the house. Let's get out of this. We are losing valuable time. Hark! Jones is calling for us."

"Yes; we have fooled here long enough," assented Boggs. "Here seems to be a door leading out at the end of the house. Let's go out this way."

Glad to escape from the place the Confederates hastily passed out into the night.

Had they looked back by the light streaming in through the door they had opened they might have discovered the tall figure of Old Fatality standing in the background, a smile upon his bronze visage.

They left the door open.

As soon as satisfied that they were beyond hearing Curt spoke in a low tone to the mysterious scout who without looking up or betraying any surprise motioned for him to descend the stairs.

A minute later Curt stood beside him.

"This is a glad meeting on my part," whispered he. "I was wishing I had some one to help me."

"I mistrusted it," replied the unknown, "so I followed you up here. Do you intend to capture the rebels?"

"If possible."

"Good. Let's get where we can see what they are doing now."

"Noiselessly crossing the room they looked cautiously out upon the handful of perplexed Confederates, who were grouped under the pine discussing their next move.

"We mustn't lose that infernal spy," declared Boggs. "Has he moved yet, Jones?"

"Nary a bit."

"Queer. Some of us'll have to dislodge the fellow. Who of you'll climb up there?"

"And get riddled for our pains!" growled one.

"Bah! it's got to be done," said Boggs.

"Strange the fool don't know enough to come down."

"I'll go for one," volunteered Jones.

"I reckon I ain't afeard to go with you," supplemented Bronson.

"Nor me," added another.

"And me," shouted a fourth.

"Enough," said Boggs.

"While you four are dislodging the game, Sperry and myself will see that he don't get away. Where is he, Jones, anyway. Hang me if I don't believe he has got off already!"

"No; he's there yet," affirmed Jones.

"See, there's his head just to the right of that big limb with the crows' nest boughs."

"Well, climb; we've lost time enough already."

"You had better keep your eye on him and the moment he moves warn us," said Jones.

"Yes, cover him with your gun, Sperry; and at the first move shoot him."

This last was spoken loud enough for the fugitive to hear even were he further away than was supposed.

Nothing in shape of a reply was vouchsafed.

"Hanged if I believe he's there," said Boggs.

"Oh, we'll show you in less'n no time. Come on, boys."

Without further delay Jones began the ascent of the tree the others following upon his heels.

The smile upon the Wizard Scout's grim visage broadened as he and Curt watched the Confederates.

"There's one apiece for us!" he whispered.

"And you may have old shoulder-straps," added Curt. "Come, why wait longer?"

The four had gained the branches of the pine and were cautiously ascending toward the supposed refuge of the scout.

Lieutenant Boggs and his companion were intently watching — the first the progress of his men, the other the motionless object in the top of the tree which he fancied was the hiding fugitive.

As silently as shadows the scouts crept upon the unsuspecting foe.

Old Fatality was unarmed, as far as weapons of war were concerned, but his long, talon-like fingers worked convulsively as if eager to clutch the throat of his victim.

The butts of a pair of revolvers protruded from the belt of Cavalry Curt.

In the midst of their anxious watch the Confederates felt themselves seized in grasps of iron and in spite of their futile resistance they were borne to the earth.

Before either of them could cry out a hand was placed over their mouths and a low voice whispered in their ears the single word.

"Surrender!"

Meanwhile the four were cautiously approaching the top of the pine wondering that their prey should keep so quiet.

Then as they drew nearer and no form of man took shape among the branches they began to anticipate the hoax played upon them.

"No one is there," whispered Jones, with a breath of relief.

"He must be there somewhere!"

"He ain't. He's got away somehow."

"Impossible."

They were soon satisfied, however, that such was the case.

"A pretty go!" muttered the leader.

"I see now, it was him we heard in the building. Get down there lively for we may not be too late to get him yet."

They saw two men under the tree as they had left them, and did not dream they were others than Boggs and Sperry their companions, until the clear tones of Curt called out:

"Hold!" the tables have turned and you are Union prisoners! Move at the peril of your lives. Our rifles cover you!"

Never were four men more completely surprised. However, they were fairly caught.

Finding they could do no better they descended one by one to surrender themselves as prisoners of war.

Lieutenant Boggs swore at a fearful rate until threatened with a gag when he relapsed into silence.

When Curt had securely bound the last of the squad, the scouts resolved to march with them to the camp of McPherson.

Who can blame them if they felt a bit proud of their capture, while the Confederates gnashed their teeth with rage, inwardly vowing that they would get even with their doughty captors.

Leaving the scouts to reach the Northern lines with their prize in safety, we must turn to follow the fortunes of others of our actors in this drama of war.

CHAPTER XVI.

WAS IT TREASON?

Sad, anxious days to Mara Morland followed her return from that eventful trip to Dalton.

Her grandfather sank fast from the wound he received that morning and it soon became evident, even to Mara, that he had but a few hours to live.

"I do not mind dying," he said. "I have lived far beyond the age of man, and I have felt I must soon be called home. It is for you that I fear, my child. I dare not contemplate your fate."

She tried to brighten his spirits with words of cheer.

He slowly shook his head.

"I see but one course for you to follow," he said finally. "Harry cannot offer you any protection, and to remain here would be rashness. I see well enough now that the old place will be devastated ere long. Ay, I had rather die than to live to see that. And it is surely coming. Mara, are you listening, child?"

"Yes, grandpa."

"You had better go to your Cousin Randolph's in Woodsville. You will be safer there. I wish Harry was here. Brave boy, I never shall see him any

more. Tell him that I thought of him in my last moments."

He said but little more after this and the hue of life faded fast from his countenance.

He had lain a long time motionless, when there was a nervous twitching at his mouth and his closed eyes opened.

"Mara, where are you?"

"Here, dear grandpa."

"See, his brow lightens with the touch of death," whispered one of the guards to the others.

"Mara," cried the dying man, huskily, "I have had such a vision, and things appeared so different. I see our mistake now. The flag of the South will yet trail in the dust and the stars and stripes in brighter luster than at Yorktown or New Orleans will wave over the country three times saved. It is right. 'Twas the same starry banner that my father fought for under the gallant Sumpter, and which I followed under General Jackson at New Orleans. Long may it wave, to glory undim—"

With the last word quivering upon his lips, his upraised arm fell, and his voice died to a low gasp. A minute later his spirit had fled from the scenes of war.

The guards had looked upon each other with wonder as they listened to the words that were freighted with so much of patriotism, so much of evil to at least one of the listeners—the innocent maiden whose fair countenance was wet with tears.

"Treason treason!" they cried as in one voice. "We ought to have hung the old traitor! Let's make an example of—"

"Hold!" exclaimed Boyd Wyman from his couch in an adjoining apartment. "Do nothing rash. They were but the ravings of a wandering mind. Let him rest in death. For the girl's sake be merciful."

The scout's words were not in vain.

The soldiers curbed their anger and the dead was left in peace.

The sight of the poor girl's grief moved them to sympathy and kindness.

Under their directions the body was prepared for a decent burial and finally, a day later, was borne to its last rest.

A few of the many slaves once owned by Colonel Morland were left at the old plantation and these shed genuine tears of sorrow.

He had been a kind master.

Two of the negroes called Pete and Dinah were very thoughtful to Mara in her bereavement.

Boyd Wyman's wounds were growing more painful. Inflammation had set in so that his case was becoming critical.

Mara was a brave girl and controlling her grief to a wonderful extent she did all in her power for the wounded scout.

The shifting scenes of war move rapidly.

A few hours after the simple funeral of Colonel Morland, two horsemen appeared in front of the house.

The leader was Lieutenant Logan.

"I must see the prisoner," he said. "I bear an order and a message from General B—"

The sight of the gallant soldier was a relief to Mara.

Perhaps he came with good tidings.

But as he stopped to speak to one of the guards and listened to his speech, the officer's face grew dark.

He came into the house a minute later.

"I am pained to find you in such a sorry plight, Miss Morland," was his greeting.

"Only say that you have come to end this terrible farce and I will not complain," she replied.

"I have," he said, quickly. "I have interceded for you and at the first opportunity have come to offer you your release."

She failed to understand his meaning.

"You have been ordered to be brought to Dalton upon the charge of treason."

"Treason;" she repeated, with quivering lips, "who dares to accuse me of that?"

"Alas! Mara, circumstances are against you. Your grandfather's dying words have a terrible signification. I fear it will go hard with you."

"But Harry will intercede for me. I will go to him."

"Stop, Mara; that is the worst feature in your case. I am sorry to tell you, but the truth must be told."

"What is it?" she cried, catching him by the arm as he passed.

He turned aside to escape her piercing gaze.

"Must I tell you," he stammered. "Harry has been dishonored. His commission has been taken from him and he has returned to the ranks under probation."

"Harry in dishonor!" she cried, clasping her hands. "You cannot mean it, Lieutenant Logan."

"It was a hard blow for me, Mara, for Harry is a fine fellow, and his disgrace came like a thunder-clap. Upon his return from Buzzard's Roost Gap he was arrested for being accessory to the escape of Cavalry Curt and—"

"It is not so!" she cried, wildly. "I will go to Dalton at once. I can and will save him."

"Nay, Mara, you let your grief run

away with your reason. He is safe at present."

"But I must see him."

"You do not realize how impossible that is, could you do him any good. He has gone to Reseca with a body of troops ordered there to its defense."

"Gone to Reseca," she repeated; "and as a common soldier—ay, more than that, a soldier in disgrace!"

"Be brave, Mara, and it shall end well. Your own welfare claims our attention now. You must leave this place at once if you value your life."

"And yet you just said that I could not."

He had turned away to pause at one of the windows—turned away purposely that he might speak without being heard by Boyd Wyman.

Mechanically she followed him.

"Mara," he said, in a low tone, "I have come up here on a trumped-up errand that I might see you. I have come to save you, even at great risk to myself, if you will accept my terms."

"Explain yourself, Lieutenant Logan."

"Do you not understand how much I love you? I cannot tell you—"

She stopped him with a wave of her hand.

"If you have nothing else to say, Lieutenant Logan, this interview might as well come to an end. I respect you as a friend, but I do not love you."

"But you would learn to, Mara. Promise to be my wife as soon as this war is over, and I will have you taken to a place of safety this very night. Do you promise?" he asked, earnestly.

"If you really loved me you would do so without exacting a promise that you know would break my heart."

"You do not quite understand me. Were it not for that Yankee—"

Something in her looks caused him to stop.

"You refuse?" he continued with a look that she would never forget.

"Yes; I would not purchase life upon such conditions."

"I am sorry. I hope you will never regret this course. I must go now. Do not blame me when the worst comes. If you change your mind I will fly to your rescue the moment you send for me. I am not so bad at heart as you think, only I had rather die than yield to a Yankee. Good-day."

With a few parting words of encouragement to Boyd Wyman he went out of the house and mounting his horse rode away.

"Did he give you any reason for hope?" asked Wyman, as Mara returned to the side of his couch.

"None."

"It is infamous!" exclaimed the scout, fiercely. "He told you of your brother?"

"Yes."

"Poor boy; in his present state of mind, I tremble for his safety."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

A little before sunset on the same afternoon as Mara was watching by the side of the wounded scout, Black Dinah entered the room and glancing cautiously around went up to her.

"Please, missus, come inter t'other room," she whispered. "You're wanted bad."

The speaker was greatly agitated, and she rolled her eyes and pulled her apron and clasped and unclasped her hands in a way that told of more than she dared or could tell.

Mara hesitated.

"Be spry 'fore sojers see."

Wondering what she could want, Mara followed her out of the room.

As they were allowed to go about the lower story of the house at liberty, the soldiers if they saw them thought nothing strange.

Dinah's teeth chattered and her eyes showed their whites in a startling way.

Mara came near uttering a cry of surprise as she entered the apartment to find a stranger standing in the center of the floor.

His hand was upraised enjoining silence.

"I am a friend," he said quickly, in a low tone.

"Fore de lawd, he mus' be a sperit," chattered Dinah, "No immortal man c'u'd a got hyer and not a bref uv a soul to see 'im—"

"Hush!" warned the man.

He was of middle age, medium in stature, and with a well-knit frame.

His cleanly shaven face was frank and handsome. Perhaps his eyes were a bit too bright, but on the whole he seemed every inch a gentleman.

He was in citizen's dress and as far as was seen he carried no weapons.

All this Mara saw at a glance.

"Are we likely to be interrupted by the soldiers?"

"Not for a short time," she replied, imitating his tone. "What is your errand, sir?"

"I will state it briefly," he answered.

"A body of horsemen are even now on the road from Dalton to affect your capture. General Johnston is calling in all of the skirmishing parties he has sent

out so as to concentrate his forces as much as possible. He cannot afford to keep any soldiers here longer. You will be taken to Dalton, or what I fear most, will be shot as a traitor as soon as you are dragged from the house. I have come to save you."

All this was spoken so rapidly that Mara could only listen in mute amazement.

"Who are you?" she faltered at last.

"Don't be surprised at the mention of my name," he replied. "I am the Wizard Scout."

In spite of his warning she could hardly suppress a cry of amazement.

"I knew you would be surprised," he declared. "I was in disguise when you saw me before, as I am now. But that makes me none the less your friend. I know of all that has transpired since we parted and knowing your peril, I have come to help you escape."

"How?" she asked.

"By flight. We must lose no time either. The troops will be here in half an hour. If you have no place you can go to, I will guide you to a friend of mine."

"I don't know what to do," she declared. "All this is so sudden and terrible. I want to go to Dalton to see Harry."

"But he is not there. He went to Reseca. To give you more confidence in what I promise to do here is a line I have brought you from Cavalry Curt."

As he spoke he unscrewed one of his buttons from his coat to produce a small piece of paper disclosed beneath its cap.

Mara took the missive with a trembling hand.

She read:

"DEAR MISS MORLAND:—Learning of your danger I am anxious to lend you my assistance toward escape. But it is impossible for me to do so. Thus I send my friend whom you have met before, knowing that he can do much better than I. You can trust him. I escaped safely from the enemy; thanks to the friend who will help you now.

"Respectfully,
"C. REMINGTON."

"I will do as you think best," she said, handing him back the paper.

"Then get ready to leave as soon as possible. Have you any place you wish to go?"

"Yes, to my cousins in Woodsville."

"Very well. But perhaps you had better go back now as your absence may create a suspicion. Boyd Wyman is still here?"

"Yes."

"It may be best to speak to him. He is to be trusted in your behalf. While you are gone I will plan a way of escape. Return soon."

As Mara returned to the side of Wyman's couch she saw by the actions of the soldiers that she had appeared none too soon to allay their suspicions.

Whatever the scout may have thought he remained quiet.

As she gazed upon his pale face bearing so plainly the evidence of his suffering it occurred to her as an act of selfishness and cowardice to leave him.

Nevertheless as soon as the soldiers turned away, she whispered to him of the presence of the strange man in the adjoining room and what he had told her.

If Boyd Wyman was surprised he did not show it by look or word.

"The Wizard Scout, you say?"

"Yes; but how could he have got here?"

"Nothing seems impossible with him. You could not have had a better friend come to your rescue. I am glad he has come. Trust in him and you will have little to fear. You had better get ready at once."

"But what will become of you?"

"Oh, I shall get along all right," he replied, carelessly. "Remember I shall be among friends. I wish you god-speed in your escape. If we never meet again, remember Boyd Wyman will never forget your kindness to him. There, you had better return to your friend as there is no time to be lost."

Not without some reluctance Mara returned to the Wizard Scout.

"I am glad you have come," he said. "I can think of but one way to escape. You will have to personate the colored servant who was here. I suppose she is allowed to go about the house at will and even out of it."

"Oh, yes. She goes to the spring for water often."

"I mistrusted as much. Now isn't there one I can personate?"

After a moment's thought she answered as her countenance brightened:

"Oh, yes; there is Pete. And they are together much."

"They are just the ones then. We shall not have to separate. If you can manage to get some of their clothing I will arrange the rest. I am almost prepared for such a disguise. I was a ducky all day yesterday. The day before an Irishman."

Mara went out to find Dinah.

She was in the kitchen and alone.

A few words explained all to the faithful servant, at least, all that was necessary to tell.

"Deed I will, missus."

"And you must keep out of sight as soon as I tell you to."

"Deed I will, missus. Is it fer yees to git away from 'em whurrible sojers?"

"Yes, Dinah. Be quick about it, only don't let them see you."

"Deed I won't, missus."

"Mara returned to the wounded scout while Dinah was getting the garments.

"Has he hit upon a plan?" he asked.

Then as she explained the plan he nodded his head in approval.

"It is best."

Mara was too anxious to remain idle long, so she soon returned to the kitchen.

Dinah seemed greatly agitated.

"What is it, Dinah?"

"Fore the lawd, it am s'prisin'! Fust dar ain't no man; den I se fin' white, and jess now w'en I tote dem fings dar what s'pose I find. A man black—yah, black as Pete. Shure nuff—"

"Hush! some one is coming."

In a louder tone:

"Aren't those cakes about done, Dinah. You seem slower than ever."

"Deed, I is," muttered Dinah, turning to the neglected cakes.

One of the guards entered the room, but seeing nothing suspicious he retired to the front of the house.

Perhaps they were expecting the troops from Dalton for they were anxiously watching the road that wound like a huge serpent in that direction.

Not a second of the next five minutes was lost by our friends.

At the end of that time had one looked for Mara Morland and the Wizard Scout he would have found them transformed into identical counterparts of Pete and Dinah.

Mara had bidden farewell to Boyd Wyman, and had told Pete and Dinah to keep out of sight.

"I think we are ready to start now," said the Wizard Scout, lowly. "Be brave and do not lose your self-possession let come what may. Follow me."

Reaching the kitchen they saw one of the soldiers in the next room.

As unconcernedly, however, as if their errand was a real one the scout took up a couple of buckets and handed one to Mara.

"Reckon we'se go to der sp'ing fer watah, honey," he said in imitation of Pete's maudlin tone.

As he opened the door a body of horsemen came in sight of the house, riding at a smart canter.

"Run long wid yer, old gal."

Under his breath he said:

"I am afraid we are too late!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FUGITIVES' FLIGHT.

"Hold on there, you black imps; where are you going?" thundered the soldier.

Mara's heart almost stopped its beating.

"To de sp'ing, massa," answered the scout, coolly.

"Seems to me you go mighty often."

"De watah done git roominated wid bad taste, massa. 'Sides Dinah done spill sum un dat las bucket."

"Go along; and see that you don't waste any time."

"Yas, massa."

As the scout and Mara started down the well-worn path to the spring from the back door, the horsemen reined up in front of the house.

"Ho there, Sergeant Howe we have come for that troublesome bird of yours," cried the foremost.

"None too soon to suit me either, Lieutenant Bradley. You will find her near at hand. She is with Wyman."

But they found the wounded scout alone.

"Miss Morland was here a few minutes ago," said Wyman. "She will probably be back directly. You might as well wait here."

"Precious little time have we to wait," growled the officer.

He did wait, however, a few minutes, time that Boyd Wyman knew well was precious to the fugitives.

"This won't do!" exclaimed the other, soon losing his patience. "Find her, men—at once."

A search for the missing maiden was instantly begun, but to the surprise and chagrin of the soldiers could not be found.

"She can't be far away," reiterated Wyman. "She must have hidden somewhere in the house when she saw you coming."

"By heavens! we will show her the fate of traitors inside of five minutes!" vociferated the anxious officer. "Summon the servants."

The chattering slaves were quickly found huddling together in a scared group in the kitchen.

Pete and Dinah according to instructions had come out of their hiding-places soon after the fugitives had left.

They were faithful to their promise, and the enraged Confederates could learn no trace of their missing prey.

"I know of one way to drive her from her retreat," said the leader, grimly. "I will do it, now."

"Here, men, some of you, Lake and Woodstaff, bear Boyd Wyman out of the

house. Sergeant Howe, see that the house is surrounded and no one escapes. I will show that girl a trick she little dreams of."

While his orders were being carried out, Lieutenant Bradley, with his own hands, set fire to the house.

"That will drive her out," he muttered, with a look of satisfaction.

Boyd Wyman uttered a groan as he witnessed the fiendish work.

We can well anticipate the result.

"Curse her!" yelled the Confederate as he looked in vain for the appearance of his victim; "she is spunky though!"

Then as the flames began to decrease and the walls fell he turned away.

"The fire has saved us further trouble. Come, men, follow me back to Dalton."

Meanwhile the scout and Mara were pursuing their flight.

The path to the spring wound down the hill, and after going a few rods the view from the house was obscured by a thick growth of bushes.

"We have no further use for these buckets and little need we should encumber ourselves with them longer," he said. "We must get as far as possible from here before our flight is discovered."

Mara followed him in silence.

Darkness was fast coming on which promised to favor them in their escape.

The country was broken and their progress was necessarily slow, however.

They heard the cries of their enemies once, but beyond that nothing was seen or known of them, until they had gone a mile or more, when looking back Mara uttered a low exclamation.

Her companion turned quickly in alarm when he saw a bright light in the distance.

"They have set fire to the house!" she exclaimed in a tremulous voice, as the night scene was lit with a brighter glare, while the flames leaped higher and higher.

"See! I can distinguish the forms of some of them by the light of the flames!" she continued clutching him by his arm.

"Oh, my poor home."

"Do not despair," he said, encouragingly, as they watched the fire. "That tells that they are not following us. But we must not lose any time. Come, we must go on."

Reluctantly she turned from the sight of the burning building.

"Homeless and a fugitive!" she murmured. "God have pity on me now."

"Do not lose courage," he said. "Remember you are not alone in your grief. All that I held dear sleeps to-night beneath the Confederate sod."

Then as if wishing to change the subject he said, pointing down the valley:

"That must be our course. On our right is Dalton, on our left, Buzzard's Gap. We must look sharp or we shall run into the clutches of foes before we know it. These disguises must be cast off at the first possible moment. Now that they have served their purpose we could not be in more dangerous costumes, for were we discovered we should be mistaken for escaping slaves and shot down without a word."

These remarks were spoken in a low tone for no one knew better than the speaker the peril that lay before them.

In the very heart of the enemy's country, overrun by their troops, escape seemed well-nigh impossible.

The scout spoke but a few times for the next hour and nothing occurred to check their flight.

Coming to a stream he proposed that they should wash the black from their faces and hands and discard the garbs that they wore over their own.

This was but a short undertaking and Mara soon appeared as herself glad to escape the uncomfortable disguise.

To her surprise her companion produced a wig and a set of long, white whiskers. Then with a few deft touches he was transformed into an old man.

"A staff, and my disguise is complete, is it not?" he said with a smile. "This is a favorite character of mine. Remember now you are to pass as my daughter."

"I do not wonder they call you the Wizard Scout," declared Mara, as she looked on with amazement.

"You will wonder less when you know me better, my darter," assuming the role of his new relationship. "But I must put these old duds out of the way."

"Hark!" she exclaimed, "what is that firing?" as the sound of firearms suddenly awoke the stillness of the night.

"The two armies are having a battle. From the direction I should judge that Schofield has attacked the flank of Johnston's army. Ah, he will give the gray-coats a hard tussle."

"I think you are a Northern man."

"My sympathies are for the Union, and while I can lift this good right arm of mine I will stand in its defense."

He spoke with great earnestness.

"You forget that I am a rebel."

"No more than you did when you saved the life of Cavalry Curt. But have done with talk. I believe I hear a body of horsemen coming this way."

"And they are coming at a smart canter," said Mara, as the sounds grew rapidly plainer.

"It must be a skirmishing squad of Johnston's. We can't be far from the road."

"Do you think they will see us?" she asked.

"Not if we can help it. We must look round for a hiding-place though. Ha! I believe yonder thicket is just the place for us. Let's see about it.

Upon reaching the spot they found that a huge tree had been uprooted there, its matted roots, filled in with earth and overgrown with a thick mass of bushes forming as impenetrable a cover as could be desired.

"Just the place for us," declared the scout, "and we are near enough, so that we can see the horse-men as they pass. Crawl in and make yourself as comfortable as possible," parting the bushes so that she had little difficulty in gaining the retreat.

"No one would mistrust you were there," he said, as he allowed the undergrowth to resume its natural position. "I can't see you, I swear."

"But aren't you going to remain?" she asked uneasily, as he seemed about to move away.

"No; keep perfectly still until I return, and above all don't get alarmed. I am going out to salute 'em fellows. They are almost here, too, I'm going to play on 'em. Just to keep up my reputation."

Before Mara could speak he stepped boldly out from the growth into the path of the oncoming horsemen.

Parting the bushes so that she had a good view of the scene Mara saw the troops, half a dozen in number, dash into sight.

To her dismay the Wizard Scout went coolly forward to meet them, crying as they swept down upon him.

"Hold up there, boys! would ye ride right over an old man?"

CHAPTER XIX.

A BOLD GAME.

"Fire and furies!" cried the leader startled by the sudden appearance of the man, "whom have we here? Whoa, Ned!"

"Only me," replied the strange scout, meekly. "Don't ride over me, Mister Sojers, and I'll get out of the way as soon as I can."

"Who are you? and where do you come from, old man, at this hour?"

"My name is Moses, sir! am going to my darter's, Ann Mayhesters. P'raps you know Ann Mayhesters?"

"Hang you and Ann Mayhesters. Get out of my way, old graybeard, or I'll ride right over you."

"Don't, Mister Sojers; have respect for these gray hairs. Whither do you ride so fast?"

"Ride over the old fool," exclaimed one of the horsemen.

"Say old man, have you see any one on your journey to-night?"

"Seen any one, my young friend, truly I have not, barring one and I would hardly think of naming her."

"Then you have seen one—a woman, too!" cried the other, eagerly.

"Boys, she is our game."

"Ten to one!"

"Where did you see her, old covey?"

"Oh, way back here, heap of a ways. She hid when I kem 'long, and I didn't let on that I see'd her."

"She's the one. Old man, we are sent out to capture that woman. She's a spy. Can you show us where you saw her?"

"She a spy," grasped the disguised scout.

"Can you guide us to her?" asked the officer, growing impatient.

"Can I? O' coorse I can. The way is as plain as the road to Ann Mayhesters'. You—"

"Then lead us to her if you value your life, old man."

"Yes—yes!" mumbled the other; "only it's a heap of a road, and I'm not very fast. Can't I jess get a lift 'hind one of you fellers?"

"Let him get up behind you, Landaff."

With what assistance the other could lend, the scout climbed up on the horse's back behind the rider.

"Don't go fast," he muttered, "or you'll throw me off. Keep straight ahead till I tell you to stop."

Mara was an anxious spectator of this scene, and as she saw the little cavalcade ride away bearing in its midst the scout she was at a loss to account for his singular course.

She could not think that it was to work her harm. What then could be his object?

The road followed by the horsemen led toward the mountains.

They rode on for a mile or more before any one spoke, when the leader reined up.

"How much further, old man, must we go?"

"I see'd her jess about thet turn. But she were going up the valler."

"Then we shall soon overtake her; that is, if she was on foot."

"She were."

"Good; come on."

After going half a mile further the old man called upon them to stop.

They were now in the heart of a wild country.

The mountains loomed up in the distance ahead.

On either hand was a rough, broken

ravine or gulch running back to the base of the heights.

"Hark! I thought mebbe I herd her holler. But my old ears ain't to be depended on like they were once. Ann Mayhesters, my——"

"Shut up your gabble, old fool!" commanded the leader. I thought I heard some one cry out."

In the silence that followed a faint cry was borne to their ears from the fastness of the region to their right.

It was beyond dispute a woman's voice.

"It is her!" exclaimed the old man, excitedly. She has fell among the rocks."

"It must be she," declared the officer. "But how in the name of Jackson can we get our horses up the gully? We shall have to leave them."

"So I reckon," affirmed the scout. "And you'll you have to leave me, too. Hark! there is her cry agin."

There was no mistaking the fact.

"You remain here with the horses, Landaff, while the rest of us go up and capture her. We shan't be gone long."

Quickly suiting action to words they dismounted and started up the ravine.

The cry was heard again.

The Wizard Scout calmly watched the departure of the five men until they disappeared from sight.

He was still sitting on the horse behind the one called Landaff.

Suddenly the latter felt a vise-like grip upon his mouth, and the next instant both were struggling on the ground.

"Don't move if you value your life!" hissed the scout in his ear. "I am going to bind you but will not harm you if you are quiet."

It was but a few minutes' work to carry out his design, and he not only bound but gagged the man.

"I'll risk you now," he said.

The other rolled his eyes and glared furiously upon him, but was powerless to help himself.

"Now I'll just do a little confiscating," declared Old Fatality, as he prepared to take away a couple of the horses.

"As I don't want you to tell any stories on me I'll take you along, colonel. Yes, by goll, and I'll take all of the horses."

Seizing Landaff in his arms as if he had been a child the scout placed him upon the back of one of the horses.

He then mounted one of the others, and prepared to lead the rest.

Glancing up the ravine to see that the Confederates were nowhere in sight, he started down the road.

Walking the animals until beyond the hearing of his enemies the scout then increased their speed.

A few minutes later he stopped in front of the place where he had left Mara.

She was about to leave her hiding-place feeling certain that he had deserted her. Her joy at his return was very great as may be well imagined.

Before she could speak the scout exclaimed:

"Quick! mount one of the horses and foller me. I hev left the graycoats in the lurch up yonder—all but this one and he's for company. Come on!"

Scarcely waiting for Mara to gain a seat upon the nearest horse the Wizard Scout rode ahead.

The captive Confederate was beside him grimly biding the time when he could give his vigilant foe the slip.

The loose horses were kept along for a time when one by one Old Fatality let them go, not caring to be bothered with them longer than he could safely avoid.

Nothing was said by either of the party, each being occupied with conflicting emotions.

To Mara the scenes of the past few days seemed like a horrible dream.

In the midst of her anxious thoughts the Wizard Scout suddenly reined up his foam-flecked horse. His long, gray locks streaming in the night breeze, his deep-set orbs of vision burning like coals of fire, he presented a wild appearance.

"Hark!" he said, sharply, "I hear the hoof-strokes of a body of horsemen coming this way. They must be grays and we are sure to meet them!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE MEETING OF FRIENDS.

Mara uttered a low cry at the scout's startling announcement.

"Cannot we go some other way and thus escape them?" she asked, tremulously.

"Not without turning back," replied the Wizard Scout, "and that would cost us hours of valuable time without throwing them off our track. No; I see no better course for us than to keep on. Ha! I have a plan.

Landaff, whose countenance had brightened at the sound of the approaching horseman, turned to his captor with a look of surprise.

"I should like to know what all this means, old man," he exclaimed, speaking for the first time.

"Hey," said the scout, "ye see my darter and I hev been turned outen house and home by 'em cursed grays. We ain't got nowhar to lay an ear. So ye see we kem over the mountings to go to my t'other darter's, Ann Mayhesters. Mebbe

ye know her. She's a rebel. So's my darter, Mollie, here. Their ma was a Southern woman. I am a Union man twenty-four hours every day and not afeerd o' Stonewall Jackson an' all his army. Mebbe my mulishness got us inter this difficulty. 'Tain't fer myself I keer. It's the gal."

"But ye're trapped at last, old man," retorted the Confederate, smiling triumphantly.

"I'm not so sure o' that."

"But those troops coming beyond no doubt belong to Johnston's forces. Hark! they will soon be here. You had better free me, old man. It is for your interest."

"That's just what I'm going to do. But afore I set in I'm going to lay down a bit a law. Ye see the shooter, man; it is loaded to kill. An' the lead it carries is fer you unless you do just as I tell you. I don't look like a man who eats his words, do I? Wal, I'm goin' to set you free. Then I want you to ride forward with us just as if you were doing it willingly. If the party are a Northern squad, I'll make it all right with them. If they are grays, as I expect, you are to tell them that you are escorting the gal and I to our relative's in Macon, an' that we are true blue—I mean in this case gray. Remember I shall watch your every movement and if you dare to betray me by word or sign I'll shoot you at the moment. My hand will be on this weapon all of the time. Do you understand?"

The man winced but did not offer to speak.

"To prove to you that I will do as I say, I will tell you that I am Old Fatality, the Wizard Scout!"

A groan from the other told that the mention of that dreaded name was not without its effect.

By this time the clatter of horses' hoofs was near at hand, and without further delay the scout freed the captive.

"Don't forget my warning!" he hissed in the trembling wretch's ear. "Come, ride forward and do as I have told you to the letter."

Without daring to disobey, while hoping that fortune would turn in his favor, the Confederate rode ahead a little in advance of his captor, whose eagle eyes never for an instant left him.

Mara followed a little behind them.

By this time the oncoming cavalcade was near at hand, and a minute later it dashed into sight.

We need not say that they were an anxious trio, though outwardly the Wizard Scout appeared as calm as if expecting to meet friends.

As the horsemen drew nearer his countenance

lightened and then he said, half aloud:

"It is he! we are saved."

Mara heard the words and she supplemented them with a cry of joy.

At the head of the approaching squad she recognized the form of her lover, Cavalry Curt!

He seemed scarcely less surprised than they and his pleasure was as great.

"You have escaped in safety," she said, as he clasped Mara's hand.

"Yes; though it has been a fearful ordeal."

"Well, have courage now, for the worst of your journey is over I think. You are going to your relatives to stop I suppose?"

"Yes; poor grandpa is no more. And Harry! can you tell me ought of him?"

"Only that he was alive and well yesterday. Please bear no unnecessary alarm on his account. And as you shall lose little in distance we will keep you company ten miles or so on your journey."

Mara murmured her thanks.

"Whom have you here," asked Curt of the Wizard Scout, pointing to Landaff.

"One of our graycoat friends," replied the other. "And as he seems a little uneasy, mebbe we had better secure him."

Landaff had waited for an opportunity to escape but his captor had been too vigilant for him to make the venture.

In a few minutes the united parties were moving on their journey.

Curt rode beside Mara to give her a succinct account of his escape from Dalton and the succeeding events, while she told of all which had befallen her, and in an unguarded moment dropped a word which apprized him as to who his rescuer had been.

"So you risked your life for me," he said, tenderly. "How can I pay you for all you have done?"

"I feel amply paid to know that you are safe."

The naive confession sent a thrill of joy to his heart.

But the time had come for them to part again and he held her hand which trembled in his while he saw the tear-drops glisten in her eyes. He knew there were several in his own.

"Have courage, dearest," he whispered.

"The war will soon be over and then I will come to you, loving and trusting."

She tried to speak in vain, but when his lips pressed hers they felt the thrill of love's sweet kiss.

"Till we meet again, darling, be of good cheer."

"Be careful of yourself, for my sake; and remember me to Harry."

[Kind readers we will bid you adieu for a short time, when we will continue this thrilling story under the title of "Under Two Flags," and will follow the fortunes of all the characters through the various scenes through which they passed. The sequel to "Cavalry Curt" will be as in-

teresting and as full of adventure as this has been. Harry Morland, Cavalry Curt, Mara and the Wizard Scout will be followed to the end of the war. Don't fail to buy this; you will be well pleased with the ending.—ED.]

THE END.

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